



*Jeremy Collier. A.M.*



*Jeremy Collier. A.M.*



A SHORT  
**V I E W**  
OF THE  
Immorality and Profaneness  
OF THE  
**English Stage :**

Together with  
The Sense of Antiquity

Upon this  
**A R G U M E N T.**

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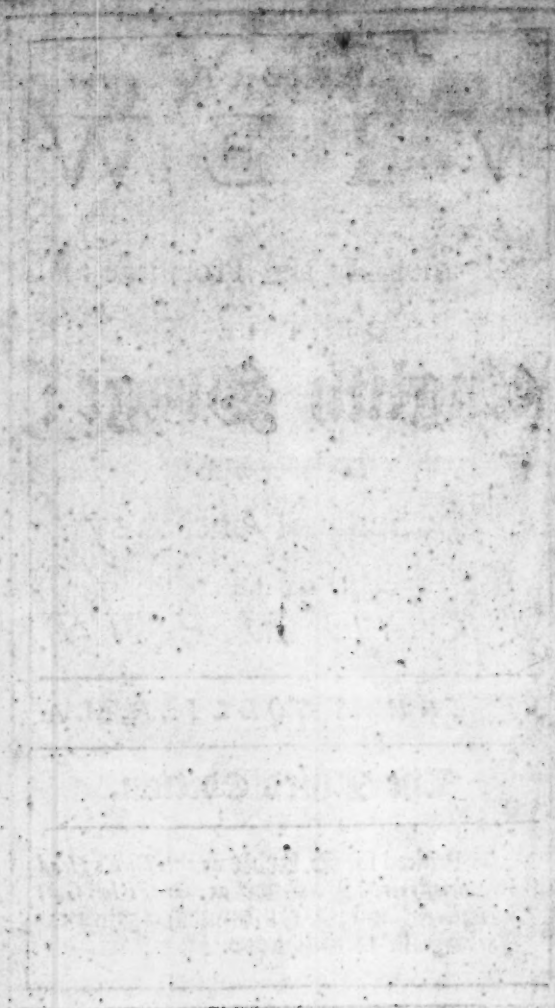
By **JEREMY COLLIER, M. A.**

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THE  
PREFACE.

**B**Eing convinc'd that nothing has gone farther in Debauching the Age than the Stage-Poets, and Play-House; I thought I could not employ my Time better than in Writing against them. These Men sure, take Virtue and Regularity, for Great Enemies, why else is their Disaffection so very Remarkable: It must be said, they have made their Attack with great Courage, and gain'd no inconsiderable Advantage. But it seems Lewdness without Atheism, is but half their Business. Conscience might possibly recover, and Revenge be

A 2                      Thought

## The Preface.

*thought on; and therefore like Foot-Pads, they must not only Rob, but Murther. To do them right, their Measures are Politickly taken: To make sure work on't, there's nothing like Destroying of Principles; Practice must follow of Course. For to have no Good Principles, is to have no Reason to be Good. Now 'tis not to be expected that People should check their Appetites, and baulk their Satisfactions, they don't know why. If Virtue has no Prospect, 'tis not worth the owning. Who would be troubled with Conscience, if 'tis only a Bugbear, and has nothing in't but Vision and the Spleen?*

*My Collection from the English Stage, is much short of what They are able to furnish. An Inventory of their Ware-House would have been a large Work: But being afraid*

## The Preface.

*fraid of over-charging the Reader,  
I thought a Pattern might do.*

*In Translating the Fathers, I have  
endeavour'd to keep close to their  
Meaning: However, in some few  
places, I have taken the Liberty of  
throwing in a Word or two; To  
clear the Sense, to preserve the Spi-  
rit of the Original, and keep the  
English upon its Legs.*

*There's one thing more to acquaint  
the Reader with; 'Tis that I have  
Ventured to change the Terms of  
Mistress and Lover, for others some-  
what more Plain, but much more Pro-  
per. I don't look upon This as any  
failure in Civility. As Good and  
Evil are different in Themselves, so  
they ought to be differently Mark'd.  
To confound them in Speech is the  
way to confound them in Practice.  
Ill Qualities ought to have ill Names,  
to prevent their being Catching.*

## The Preface.

*Indeed Things are in a great measure Govern'd by Words: To Guild over a foul Character, serves only to perplex the Idea, to encourage the Bad, and mislead the Unwary. To treat Honour, and Infamy alike, is an injury to Virtue, and a sort of Levelling in Morality. I confess, I have no Ceremony for Debauchery. For to Complement Vice, is but one Remove from worshipping the Devil.*

*March 5th 1697.*

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THE

# THE CONTENTS.

## CHAP. I.

<b>T</b> HE Introduction.	Page 1
<i>The Immodesty of the Stage.</i>	p. 3
<i>The Ill Consequences of This Liberty.</i>	p. 5
<i>Immodesty a Breach of good Behaviour.</i>	p. 6
<i>The Stage faulty in this respect to a very Scandalous degree.</i>	p. 8
<i>Modesty the Character of Women.</i>	p. 9
<i>The Natural Serviceableness of this Quality.</i>	p. 11
<i>Immodesty much more insufferable under the Christian, than under the Heathen Religion.</i>	p. 14
<i>The Roman, and Greek Theatres more inoffensive than the English.</i>	p. 15
<i>This proved from Plautus.</i>	Ibid.
<i>From Terence.</i>	p. 20
<i>From Seneca's Tragedies.</i>	p. 25
<i>The Comparison carried on to the Theatre at Athens.</i>	Ibid.
<i>A short Character of Æschylus.</i>	p. 26
<i>The Cleanness of his Expression.</i>	p. 27
<i>The Genius and Conduct of Sophocles.</i>	p. 28
A 4	The

# The CONTENTS

The Sobriety of his Plays.	p. 29
Euripides's Character distinguished from the two former.	p. 30
The Reserv'dness of his Style.	p. 31
All Humours not fit for Representation.	p. 35
A Censure of Aristophanes.	p. 36
Aristophanes his Testimony against himself.	p. 48
The Authorities of	Ben. Johnson.
	Beaumont & Fletcher.
	And Corneille.
	against the present Stage.

---

## CHAP. II.

### The Profaneness of the Stage.

<b>T</b> His Charge prov'd upon them,	
I. By their Cursing and Swearing.	p. 57
The English Stage formerly less hardy in this respect.	Ibid.
The provokingness of this Sin.	p. 58
This Offence punishable by Law, and how far.	p. 59
Swearing in the Play-House an Un-Gentlemanly, as well as an Un-Christian practice.	
A Second Branch of the Profaneness of the Stage, consisting in their Abuse of Religion, and the Holy Scriptures.	p. 60
Instances of this Liberty in the Mock-Astrologer.	Ib.
In the Orphan.	p. 62
	In



# The CONTENTS.

<i>In the Old Batchelour, and Double Dealer.</i>	p. 63, 64
<i>In Don Sebastian.</i>	p. 65
<i>Brief Remarks upon a Passage or two in the Dedications of Aurenge Zebe, and the Translation of Juvenal.</i>	p. 66, 69
<i>Farther Instances of Profaneness in Love Triumphant.</i>	p. 72
<i>In Love for Love.</i>	p. 74
<i>In the Provok'd Wife.</i>	p. 77
<i>And in the Relapse.</i>	p. 78
<i>The Horrid Impiety of this Liberty.</i>	p. 80
<i>The Stage guilty of downright Blasphemy.</i>	
<i>This Charge made good from several of the Plays above-mention'd.</i>	p. 82
<i>The Comparative Regularity of the Heathen Stage, exemplified in Terence, and Plautus.</i>	p. 86
<i>And in the Greek Tragedians.</i>	p. 87
<i>Seneca more exceptionable than the Greeks, but not so faulty as the Modern Stage.</i>	p. 94
<i>This outraging of Religion Intolerable.</i>	p. 95

---

## C H A P. III.

<b>T</b> <i>HE Clergy abused by the Stage.</i>	p. 98
<i>This Usage both Unpresidented.</i>	p. 112
<i>And Unreasonable.</i>	p. 127
<i>The Misbehaviour of the Stage upon this account.</i>	p. 138
	CHAP.

# The CONTENTS.

## CHAP IV.

- I**mmorality encouraged by the Stage. p. 140  
*The Stage-Poets make Libertines their Top-Characters, and give them Success in their Debauchery.* p. 142  
A Character of their fine Gentleman. p. 143  
*Their fine Ladies Accomplish'd much after the same manner.* p. 146  
*The Young People of Figure in Plautus and Terence, have a greater regard to Morality.* Ibid.  
*The Defence in the Preface to the Mock-Astrologer, not sufficient.* p. 148  
*The Christian Religion makes a great difference in the Case.* p. 149  
*Horace of a Contrary Opinion to the Mock-Astrologer.* p. 150  
*The Mock-Astrologer's Instances from Ben. Johnson Unserviceable.* p. 151  
*The Authority of Shakespear against the Mock-Astrologer.* p. 154  
*His Maxim founded on the difference between Tragedy, and Comedy, a Mistake.* p. 155  
*Delight not the Chief-End of Comedy.* p. 157  
*This Assertion prov'd against the Mock-Astrologer from the Testimonies of Rapin.* Ibid.  
*And Ben. Johnson.* p. 158  
*Aristotle, and Quintilian, cited to the same purpose.* p. 159, 161  
To

# The CONTENTS.

<i>To make Delight the main Business in Comedy, dangerous, and unreasonable.</i>	p. 162
<i>The improper Conduct of the Stage with respect to Poetry, and Ceremony.</i>	p. 165
<i>Extravagant Rants.</i>	p. 167
<i>Gingles in the Spanish Fryer, King Arthur, and Love Triumphant.</i>	p. 169
<i>Women roughly treated by the Stage.</i>	p. 171
<i>Their Course Usage of the Nobility.</i>	p. 173
<i>These Freedoms peculiar to the English Stage.</i>	p. 175

---

## CHAP. V.

### SECT. I.

<b>R</b> emarks upon <i>Amphitryon.</i>	p. 177
<i>The Machines Prophane, Smutty, and out of Character.</i>	p. 178
<i>The singularity of the Poet in this point.</i>	p. 180
<i>Blasphemy in Absalom and Achitophel.</i>	p. 184
<i>A Poem upon the Fall of the Angels, call'd a Fairy way of Writing.</i>	p. 189
<i>The Punishment of the Damned ridiculed.</i>	p. 192

### SECT. II.

<b>R</b> emarks on the Comical History of <i>Don Quixote.</i>	p. 196
<i>The Poet's horrible Profaneness.</i>	p. 197
	<i>His</i>

## The CONTENTS.

*His want of Modesty, and Regard to the Audience.*

p. 202

*All Imitations of Nature not proper for the Stage.*

p. 204

*The Poet's Talent in Raillery, and Dedication.*

p. 205

### SEC T. III.

**R**emarks on the Relapse. p. 209

*A Misnommer in the Title of the Play.* p. 210

*The Moral Vicious.* p. 211

*The Plot ill contriv'd.* p. 212

*The Manners or Characters out of Order.* p. 218

*The three Dramatick Unities broken.* p. 228

---

### CHAP. VI.

**T**HE Opinion of the Heathen Philosophers,  
Orators, and Historians concerning the Stage.

p. 233

*The Stage censured by the State. This proved from  
the Constitutions of Athens, Sparta, and Rome.*

p. 240

*Farther Instances of this publick Discountenance in  
the Theodosian Code.*

p. 241

*In our own Statute-Book.*

p. 242

*And in the late Order of the French King.*

p. 243

*An Order of the Bishop of Arras against Plays.*

p. 245

*The*

# The CONTENTS.

*The Stage Condemn'd by the Primitive Church.*

p. 250

*The Councils of Illiberis, Arles, &c. cited.* Ibid.

*The Testimonies of the Fathers against the Stage, particularly, of Theophilus Antiochenus.* p. 252

*Of Tertullian.* p. 253

*Of Clemens Alexandrinus.* p. 260

*Of Minutius Fœlix.* p. 261

*Of St. Cyprian.* Ibid.

*Lactantius.* p. 265

*St. Chrysostom.* p. 267

*St. Hierom.* p. 272

*And St. Augustin cited to the same purpose.* p. 273

*The Censure of the Fathers, and Councils, &c. applicable to the English Stage.* p. 276

*The Conclusion.* p. 280

## ERRATA.

**P**Age 11. line 21. read *Scarcely*, p. 15. in the Marg. r. *Trucul*, p. 31. l. 3. add *and*, p. 35. l. 6. r. *I'm*, p. 64. l. 22. r. *Mark*, p. 186. l. 6. dele *And*, p. 191. l. 18. r. *Circumstances*, p. 280. l. 13. r. *their Songs*.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**T**He Business of *Plays* is to recommend Vertue, and discountenance Vice; To shew the Uncertainty of Humane Greatness, the suddain Turns of Fate, and the Unhappy Conclusions of Violence and Injustice: 'Tis to expose the Singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falshood contemptible, and to bring every Thing that is Ill under Infamy, and Neglect. This Design has been odly pursued by the *English Stage*. Our *Poets* write with a different view, and are gone into another Interest. 'Tis true, were their Intentions fair, they might be *Serviceable* to this *Purpose*. They have in a great measure the Springs of Thought and Inclination in their Power. *Show, Musick, Action, and Rhetorick*, are moving Entertainments; and, rightly employ'd, would be very significant. But

## The Introduction.

Force and Motion are Things indifferent, and the Use lies chiefly in the Application. These Advantages are now, in the Enemies Hand, and under a very dangerous Management. Like Cannon seized, they are pointed the wrong way; and by the Strength of the Defence the Mischief is made the greater. That this Complaint is not unreasonable, I shall endeavour to prove by shewing the Misbehaviour of the Stage, with respect to *Morality*, and *Religion*. Their *Liberties* in the Following Particulars are intolerable, viz. Their *Smuttiness* of Expression; Their *Swearing*, *Prophaneness*, and *Lewd Application of Scripture*; Their *Abuse* of the *Clergy*, Their *making their top Characters Libertines*, and giving them *Success* in their *Debauchery*. This Charge, with some other Irregularities, I shall make good against the Stage, and shew both the *Novelty* and *Scandal* of the Practice. And first, I shall begin with the *Rankness* and *Indecency* of their Language.

CHAP.

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## CHAP. I.

### *The Immodesty of the Stage.*

**I**N treating this Head, I hope the Reader does not expect that I should set down Chapter and Page, and give him the Citations at length. To do this would be a very Unacceptable and Foreign Employment. Indeed the Passages, many of them, are in no Condition to be handled: He that is desirous to see these Flowers, let him do it in their own Soil: 'Tis my Business rather to kill the Root than *transplant* it. But that the Poets may not complain of Injustice; I shall point to the Infection at a Distance, and refer in General to *Play* and *Person*.

Now among the Curiosities of this kind we may reckon Mrs. *Pinchwife*, *Horner*, and Lady *Fidget* in the *Country Wife*; Widdow *Blackacre* and *Oliva* in the *Plain Dealer*. These, though not all the exceptionable *Characters*, are the most remarkable. I'm sorry the Author should stoop his Wit thus Low, and use his Understanding so unkindly. Some People

## The Immodeſty

appear Coarſe, and Slovenly out of Poverty: They can't well go to the Charge of Senſe. They are Offenſive, like Beggars, for want of Neceſſaries. But this is none of the *Plain Dealer's* Caſe; He can afford his Muſe a better Dreſs when he pleaſes. But then the Rule is, where the Motive is the leſs, the Fault is the greater. To proceed. *Jacinta, Elvira, Dalinda,* and *Lady Phant,* in the *Mock Astrologer, Spaniſh Fryar, Love Triumphant* and *Double Dealer,* forget themſelves extremely: And almoſt all the *Characters* in the *Old Batchelor,* are foul and nauſeous. *Love for Love,* and the *Relapſe,* ſtrike ſometimes upon this Sand, and ſo likewiſe does *Don Sebastian.*

I don't pretend to have read the *Stage* Through, neither am I Particular to my Utmoſt. Here is quoting enough unleſs 'twere better: Beſides, I may have occaſion to mention ſomewhat of this kind afterwards. But from what has been hinted already, the Reader may be over furniſhed. Here is a large Collection of Debauchery; ſuch *Pieces* are rarely to be met with: 'Tis ſometimes painted at length too, and appears in great variety of Progreſs and Practiſe. It wears almoſt all ſorts of Dreſſes to engage the Fancy, and faſten upon the Me-

Memory, and keep up the Charm from Languishing. Sometimes you have it in Image and Description; sometimes by way of Allusion; sometimes in disguise; and sometimes without it. And what can be the Meaning of such a Representation, unless it be to Tincture the Audience, to extinguish Shame, and make Lewdness a Diversion? This is the Natural Consequence, and therefore one would think 'twas the Intention too. Such Licentious Discourse tends to no Point but to stain the Imagination, to awaken Folly, and to weaken the Defences of Vertue: It was upon the account of these Disorders that *Plato* banish'd *Poets* his *Commonwealth*: And one of the *Fathers* calls *Poetry*, *Vinum Demonum*, an intoxicating Draught, made up of the Devil's *Dispensatory*.

I grant the abuse of a Thing is no Argument against the use of it. However, Young People particularly, should not entertain themselves with a Lewd Picture; especially when 'tis drawn by a Masterly Hand. For such a Liberty may probably raise those Passions which can neither be discharged without Trouble, nor satisfied without a Crime: 'Tis not safe for a Man to trust his Vertue too far, for fear it should give

## The Immodesty

him the slip. But the danger of such an Entertainment is but part of the Objection: 'Tis all Scandal and Meanness into the Bargain: It does in effect degrade Humane Nature; sinks Reason into Appetite, and breaks down the Distinctions between Man and Beast. Goats and Monkeys, if they could speak, would express their Brutality in such Language as This.

To argue the Matter more at large.

Smuttiness is a Fault in Behaviour as well as in Religion. 'Tis a very Coarse Diversion, the Entertainment of those who are generally least both in Sense, and Station; The looser part of the *Mob*, have no true relish of Decency and Honour, and want Education, and Thought, to furnish out a genteel Conversation. Barrenness of Fancy makes them often take up with those Scandalous Liberties. A *Vicious* Imagination may blot a great deal of Paper at this rate with ease enough: And 'tis possible Convenience may sometimes invite to the Expedient. The Modern Poets seem to use *Smut* as the Old Ones did *Machines*, to relieve a fainting Invention. When *Pegasus* is jaded, and would stand still, he is apt like other *Tits*, to run into every Puddle.

Obscenity in any Company is a rustic uncreditable Talent; but among Women 'tis particularly rude. Such Talk would be very affrontive in Conversation, and not endur'd by any Lady of Reputation. Whence then comes it to pass, that those Liberties which disoblige so much in Conversation, should entertain upon the *Stage*. Do the Women leave all the regards to Decency and Conscience behind them, when they come to the *Play-House*? Or does the Place transform their Inclinations, and turn their former Aversions into Pleasure? Or were their Pretences to Sobriety elsewhere nothing but Hypocrisy and Grimace? Such Suppositions as these are all Satir and Invective: They are rude Imputations upon the whole Sex. To treat the Lades with such Stuff, is no better than taking their Money to abuse them. It supposes their Imagination vitious, and their Memories ill furnish'd: That they are practis'd in the Language of the Stews, and pleas'd with the Scenes of Brutishness. When at the same time the Customs of Education, and the Laws of Decency, are so very cautious, and reserv'd in regard to Women: I say so very reserv'd, that 'tis almost a Fault for them to Understand they are ill Used.

## The Immodesty

They can't discover their Disgust without disadvantage, nor Blush without disadvantage to their Modesty. To appear with any skill in such Cant, looks as if they had fallen upon ill Conversation; or Managed their Curiosity amiss. In a word, he that treats the Ladies with such Discourse, must conclude either that they like it, or they do not. To suppose the first, is a gross Reflection upon their *Vertue*. And as for the latter case, it entertains them with their own Aversion; which is ill Nature, and ill Manners enough in all Conscience. And in this Particular, Custom and Conscience, the Forms of Breeding, and the Maxims of Religion, are on the same side. In other Instances *Vice* is often too fashionable; But here a Man can't be a Sinner, without being a Clown.

In this respect the *Stage* is faulty to a scandalous Degree of Nauseousness and Aggravation. For

*1st.* The *Poets* make *Women* speak Smuttily. Of This the Places before mention'd are sufficient Evidence: And if there was occasion they might be Multiplied to a much greater Number: Indeed the *Comedies* are seldom clear of these Blemishes: And sometimes you have them in *Tragedy*. For Instance.

The



## of the Stage.

9

The *Orphans Monimia* makes a very improper Description; And the Royal *Leonora*, in the *Spanish Friar*, runs a strange Length in the History of Love, p. 50. And do Princesses use to make their Reports with such fulsom Freedoms? Certainly this *Leonora* was the the first Queen of her Family. Such Raptures are too Luscious for *Joan of Naples*. Are these the *Tender Things* Mr. *Dryden* says the Ladies call on him for? I suppose he means the *Ladies* that are too Modest to show their Faces in the *Pit*. This Entertainment can be fairly design'd for none but such. Indeed it hits their Palate exactly. It regales their Lewdness, graces their Character, and keeps up their Spirits for their Vocation: Now to bring Women under such Misbehaviour, is Violence to their Native Modesty, and a Misrepresentation of their Sex. For Modesty as, Mr. *Rapin* observes, is the *Character* of Women. To represent them without this Quality, is to make Monsters of them, and throw them out of their Kind. *Euripides*, who was no negligent Observer of Humane Nature, is always careful of this Decorum. Thus *Phædra*, when possess'd with an infamous Passion, takes all imaginable Pains to conceal it. She is as regular

*Reflect. upon*  
*Aristot.*  
*Sec.*

*Eurip.*  
*Hippolit.*

## The Immodesty

*Hamlet.*

*Don Quix-  
ot. Relapse.  
Love for  
Love.*

gular and reserv'd in her Language as the most vertuous Matron. 'Tis true, the force of Shame and Desire; The Scandal of Satisfying, and the difficulty of parting with her Inclinations, disorder her to Distraction. However, her Frensy is not Lewd; She keeps her Modesty even after She has lost her Wits. Had *Shakespear* secur'd this point for his young Virgin *Ophelia*, the Play had been better contriv'd. Since he was resolv'd to drown the Lady like a Kitten, he should have set her a swimming a little sooner. To keep her alive only to sully her Reputation, and discover the Rankness of her Breath, was very Cruel. But it may be said the Freedoms of Distraction go for nothing, a Fever has no Faults, and a Man *non Compos*, may kill without Murther. It may be so: But then such People ought to be kept in dark Rooms, and without Company. To shew them, or let them loose, is somewhat unreasonable. But after all, the Modern Stage seems to depend upon this Expedient. Women are sometimes represented Silly, and sometimes Mad, to enlarge their Liberty, and screen their Impudence from Censure: This Politick Contrivance we have in *Marcella*, *Hoyden*, and *Miss Prue*.  
How.

However it amounts to this Confession ; that Women, when they have their Understandings about them, ought to converse otherwise. In fine ; Modesty is the distinguishing Vertue of that Sex, and serves both for Ornament and Defence : Modesty was design'd by Providence as a Guard to Virtue ; And that it might be always at Hand, 'tis wrought into the Mechanism of the Body. 'Tis likewise proportion'd to the occasions of Life, and strongest in Youth when passion is so too. 'Tis a Quality as true to Innocence, as the Senses are to Health ; whatever is ungrateful to the first, is prejudicial to the latter. The Enemy no sooner approaches, but the Blood rises in Opposition, and looks Defiance to an Indecency. It supplies the room of Reasoning, and Collection : Intuitive Knowledge can scarcely make a quicker Impression ; And what then can be a surer Guide to the Unexperienced ? It teaches by sudden Instinct and Aversion ; This is both a ready and a powerful Method of Instruction. The Tumult of the Blood and Spirits, and the Uneasiness of the Sensation, are of singular Use. They serve to awaken Reason, and prevent surprize. Thus the Distinctions of Good  
and

## The Immodesty

and Evil are refresh'd, and the Temptation kept at a proper Distance.

Mock  
Astrologer.  
O'd Bare-  
clout.

2<sup>ly</sup>. They Represent their single Ladys, and Persons of Condition, under these Disorders of Liberty. This makes the Irregularity still more Monstrous, and a greater Contradiction to Nature, and Probability: But rather than not be Vitious, they will venture to spoil a Character. This mismanagement we have partly seen already. *Jacinta*, and *Belinda* are farther Proof: And the *Double Dealer* is particularly remarkable. There are but *Four* Ladys in this *Play*, and *Three* of the biggest of them are Whores. A Great Compliment to Quality, to tell them there is not above a quarter of them Honest! This was not the Roman Breeding. *Terence* and *Plautus* his Strumpets were Little people; but of this more hereafter.

3<sup>ly</sup>. They have oftentimes not so much as the poor refuge of a Double Meaning to fly to. So that you are under a necessity either of taking Ribaldry or Nonsense. And when the Sentence has two Handles, the worst is generally turn'd to the Audience. The Matter is so Contrived that the Smut and Scum of the Thought rises uppermost; And, like a Picture drawn to Sight, looks always upon the Company.

4<sup>ly</sup>. And

47. And which is still more extraordinary, the *Prologues*, and *Epilogues* are sometimes Scandalous to the last degree. I shall discover them for once, and let them stand like Rocks in the Margin. Now here, properly speaking, the *Actors* quit the *Stage*, and remove from Fiction into Life. Here they converse with the *Boxes*, and *Pit*, and address directly to the Audience. These Preliminary and concluding Parts, are design'd to justify the Conduct of the *Play*, and bespeak the Favour of the Company. Upon such Occasions one would imagine if, ever, the Ladies should be used with Respect, and the Measures of Decency observ'd. But here we have Lewdness without Shame or Example: Here the *Poet* exceeds himself. Here are such Strains as would turn the Stomach of an ordinary Debauchee, and be almost nauseous in the *Stews*. And to make it the more agreeable, Women are commonly pick'd out for this Service. Thus the *Poet* courts the good Opinion of the Audience. This is the Desert he Regales the Ladies with at the Close of the Entertainment: It seems, he thinks, they have admirable Palates! Nothing can be a greater Breach of Manners than such Liberties as these. If a Man would Study to outrage

*Mock Astrologer.*  
*Country Wife.*  
*Cleomenes.*  
*Old Batchelour.*

*Quality*

## The Inimodesty

*lity* and Virtue, he could not do it more Effectually. But

5ly. Smut is still more insufferable with respect to Religion. The Heathen Religion was in a great Measure a *Mystery of Iniquity*. Lewdness was Consecrated in the Temples, as well as practised in the *Stews*. Their Deities were great Examples of Vice, and worship'd with their own Inclination: 'Tis no wonder therefore their Poetry should be tinged with their Belief, and that the *Stage* should borrow some of the Liberties of their Theology. This made *Mercury's* Procuring, and *Jupiter's* Adultery, the more passable in *Amphitrion*: Upon this Score *Gimnausum* is less Monstrous in Praying the Gods to send her store of Gallants. And thus *Charea* defends his Adventure by the precedent of *Jupiter* and *Danae*. But the Christian Religion is quite of another Complexion. Both its Precepts, and Authorities, are the highest discouragement to Licentiousness. It forbids the remotest Tendencies to Evil, banishes the Follies of Conversation, and obliges up to Sobriety of Thought. That which might pass for Raillery, and Entertainment in Heathenism, is detestable in Christianity. The Restraint of the Precept, and the Quality of the Deity,

Plaut.

Cistellar.

Terent.  
Eunuch.

Deity, and the Expectations of Futurity, quite alter the Case.

But notwithstanding the Latitudes of Paganism, the Roman and Greek *Theatres* were much more inoffensive than ours. To begin with *Plautus*. This Comedian, tho' the most exceptionable, is modest upon the Comparison. For

1<sup>st</sup>. He rarely gives any of the above-mention'd Liberties to Women; And when there are any Instances of the contrary, 'tis only in Prostituted and Vulgar People; And even these, don't come up to the Grossness of the *Modern Stage*.

*Afinar.*

For the Purpose. *Cleareta* the Procurer's borders a little upon Rudeness: *Lena* *Cistellar.* and *Bacchis* the Strumpet are Airy *Bacchid.* and somewhat over-merry, but not *Al Angloise* obscene. *Chalinus* in *Womans Cloaths* is the most remarkable.

*Casim.*

*Pasicompa*, *Charinus* his Wench, talks too freely to *Lyfimachus*; And so does *Sophoclidisca* Slave to *Lemnoselene*. And

*Mercat.*

*Act. 3.*

*Persa.*

*Trucui.*

lastly: *Phronesium* a Woman of the Town uses a double entendre to *Stratophanes*. These are the most censurable Passages, and I think all of them with relation to Women; which considering how the World goes is very moderate. Several of our Single Plays shall far out-do all

This

## The Immodesty

This put together. And yet *Plautus* has upon the matter left us 20 entire *Comedies*. So that in short, these Roman Lasses are meer *Vestal Virgins*, comparatively speaking.

2ly. The *Men* who talk intemperately are generally *Slaves*; I believe *Dordalus* the Pander, and *Lusiteles* will be found the only exception: And this latter young Gentleman; drops but one over-airy Expression: And for this Freedom, the Poet seems to make him give Satisfaction in the rest of his Character. He disputes very handsomely by himself against irregular Love; The Discourse between him and *Philto* is instructive and well-managed. And afterwards he gives *Lesbonicus* a great deal of sober Advice, and declaims heartily against Luxury and Lewdness. Now by confining his Rudeness to little People, the Fault is much extenuated. For First, the representation is more Natural this way; And which is still better, 'tis not so likely to pass into Imitation: Slaves and Clowns are not big enough to spread Infection; and set up an ill Fashion, 'Tis possible the Poet might contrive these *Peasants* *Offensive* to discountenance the Practice. Thus the *Heilots* in *Sparta* were made drunk to keep Intemperance out of Credit



Credit. I don't mention this as if I approv'd the Expedient, but only to show it a Circumstance of Mitigation and Excuse.

Farther, These *Slaves* and *Pandars* seldom run over and Play their Gambols before Women. There are but Four Instances of this kind as I remember, *Olympio*, *Palæstrio*, *Dordalus*, and *Stratilax* are the Persons. And the Women they Discourse with, are two of them *Slaves*, and the third a *Wench*. But with our *Dramatists*, the Case is otherwise. With us *Smuttiness* is absolute and unconfined. 'Tis under no restraint of Company, nor has any regard to Quality or Sex. Gentlemen talk it to Ladies, and Ladies to Gentlemen, with all the Freedom and Frequency imaginable. This is in earnest to be very hearty in the Cause: To give Title and Figure to Ill Manners, is the utmost that can be done. If Lewdness will not thrive under such Encouragement, it must e'en miscarry!

4ly. *Plautus's* Prologues and Epilogues are inoffensive. 'Tis true, *Lambinus* pretends to fetch a double *entendre* out of that to *Pænulus*, but I think there is a Strain in the Construction. His Prologue to the *Captivi*, is worth the observing.

Casin. Mil.  
Glor. Pers.  
Trucul.

# The Immodesty

*Fabula huic operam date.*

*Pray mind the Play.* The next words give the reason why it deserves regarding.

*Non enim pertractate facta est  
Neq; spurcidi insunt versus immemorabiles.*

We see here the Poet confesses Smut a scandalous Entertainment : That such Liberties ought to fall under Neglect, to lie unmention'd, and be blotted out of Memory.

And that this was not a Copy of his Countenance, we may learn from his Compositions. His best *Plays* are almost always Modest, and clean Complexion'd. His *Amphitryo*, excepting the ungentle Addition, is such. His *Epidicus*, the Master-piece of his whole Collection, is inoffensive throughout : And so are his *Menechmi*, *Rudens*, and *Trinummus*, which may be reckon'd amongst some of his next Best. His *Truculentus*, another fine *Play* (though not entire) with a Heathen Allowance, is pretty Passable. To be short : Where he is most a Poet, he is generally least a Buffoon. And where the Entertainment is Smut, there is rarely any other Dish well dress'd : The Contrivance is com-

commonly Wretched, the Sense lean and full of Quibbles. So that his Understanding seems to have left him when he began to abuse it.

To conclude, *Plautus* does not dilate upon the Progress, Successes, and Disappointments of *Love*, in the *Modern* way. This is nice Ground, and therefore he either stands off, or walks gravely over it. He has some Regard to the Retirements of Modesty, and the Dignity of Humane Nature, and does not seem to make Lewdness his Business. To give an Instance: *Silenium* is much gone in Love, *Cistellari* but Modest withal, though formerly Debauch'd. *A. 1.*

She is sorry her Spark was forced from her, and in Danger of being lost. But then she keeps within compass, and never flies out into Indecency. *Alcesimarchus* is strangely smitten with this *Silenium*, and almost distracted to recover her. He is *Ibid. A. 2.* uneasy and blusters, and threatens, but his Passion goes off in Generals. He Paints no Images of his Extravagance, nor descends to any nauseous Particulars.

And yet after all, *Plautus* wrote in an Age not perfectly refin'd, and often seems to design his *Plays* for a Vulgar Capacity. 'Twas upon this View I suppose his *Characters* exceed Nature, and his ill Features

## The Immodesty

are drawn too large: His Old Men over-Credulous, his Misers Romantic, and his Coxcombs improbably Singular. And 'tis likely for this reason his *Slaves* might have too much Liberty.

*Heauton.*

*Terence* appear'd when Breeding was more exact, and the *Town* better polish'd; And he manages accordingly: He has but one faulty bordering Expression, which is that of *Chremes* to *Clitipho*. This single Sentence apart, the rest of his Book is (I think) unsullied, and fit for the nicest Conversation. I mean only in reference to the Argument in Hand, for there are things in Him, which I have no intention to warrant. He is extremely careful in the Behaviour of his Women. Neither *Glycerium* in *Andria*, *Pamphila* in *Eunuchus*, or *Pamphila* in *Adelphi*, *Phanium* in *Phormio*, or *Philumena* in *Hecyra*, have any share of Conversation upon the Stage. Such Freedom was then thought too much for the Reservedness of a Maiden-Character. 'Tis true in *Heautontimoroumenos* the Poet's Plot obliged *Antiphila* to go under the Disguise of *Bacchis* her Maid. Upon this Occasion they hold a little Discourse together: But then *Bacchis*, though she was a Woman of the *Town*, behaves her self with all the Decency imaginable. She does not talk

in the Language of her Profession : But commends *Antiphila* for her Vertue: *Antiphila* only says how constant she has been to *Clinia*, seems Surprised at his Arrival, and Salutes him civilly upon't, and we hear no more from her. Mr. *Dryden* seems to refer to this Conduct in his Dramatick Poesie. He Censures the *Romans* for making *Mutes* of their single Women. This he calls the *Breeding of the Old Elizabeth way, which was for Maids to be seen, and not to be heard*. Under Favour the old Discipline would be very serviceable upon the Stage. As Matters go, the *Mutes* are much to few. For certainly 'tis better to say nothing, than talk out of Character, and to ill purpose.

To return. The Virgin injured by *Charea* does nothing but weep, and won't so much as speak her Misfortune to the Women. But Comedy is strangely improved since that time; For *Dalinda* has a great deal more Courage, though the loss of her Virtue was her own Fault.

But *Terence* has that regard for Women, that he won't so much as touch upon an ill Subject before them. Thus *Chremes* was ashamed to mention any thing about his Son's Lewdness when his Wife was present.

## The Immodesty

Hauton.  
A. 5. 4.

Eunuch.  
A. 5. 4. 5.  
Adelpb.  
A. 2. 3.

*Rudet dicere hac presente verbum turpe.*

The Slaves in this Comedian are kept in order, and civilly bred. They Guard and Fence when occasion requires, and step handsomly over a dirty place. The Poet did not think Littleness and Low Education a good Excuse for Ribaldry. He knew Infection at the weakest, might seize on some Constitutions: Besides, the Audience was a Superior Presence, and ought to be consider'd. For how Negligent soever People may be at Home, yet when they come before their Betters, 'tis Manners to look wholsom.

Now though *Plautus* might have the richer Invention; *Terence* was always thought the most judicious Comedian. His Raillery is not only finer, and his Style better Polish'd; bnt his Characters are more just, and he seems to have reach'd farther into Life than the other. To take Leave of this Author, even his Strumpets are better behaved than our honest Women, than our Women of Quality of the English Stage. *Bacchis* in *Heautontimoroumenos*, and *Bacchis* in *Hecyra*, may serve for Example. They are both modest, and converse not unbecoming their Sex. *Thais*, the most Accomplished in  
her

her way, has a great deal of Spirit and <sup>Eunuch.</sup> Wheedling in her Character, but talks no Smut.

Thus we see with what Caution and Sobriety of Language *Terence* manages. 'Tis possible this Conduct might be his own Modesty, and result from Judgment and Inclination. But however his Fancy stood, he was sensible the Coarse way would not do. The Stage was then under Discipline, the Publick *Censors* formidable, and the Office of the *Choragus* was originally to prevent the Excesses of Liberty. <sup>Cesaub. Annos. in Cursul. Plaut.</sup>

To this we may add, the *Nobles* had no Relish for Obscenity; 'twas the ready way to Disoblige them. And therefore 'tis *Horace's* Rule.

*Net immunda crepent ignominiosaque dicta. De Arte*  
*Offendantur enim quibus est Equus & Pater,* <sup>Poet.</sup>  
*& res.*

The Old *Romans* were particularly careful there Women might not be affronted in Conversation: For this reason the Unmarried kept off from Entertainments for fear of learning new Language. And in <sup>Var. apud Nonium.</sup> *Greece* no Woman above the degree of a *Slave*, was treated Abroad by any but Relations. 'Tis probable the old Comedy <sup>Corn. N p.</sup> was silenced at *Athens* upon this Score, as well

*Arist. lib.*  
4. de Mor.  
cap. 14.

*Vit. Eurip.*  
*ed. Cantab.*  
1694.

well as for Defamation. For as *Aristotle* observes, the new Set of Comedians were much more modest than the former. In this Celebrated Republick, if the *Poets* wrote any thing against Religion or Good Manners, they were tried for their Misbehaviour, and liable to the highest Forfeitures.

It may not be amiss to observe, that there are no Instances of Debauching Married Women, in *Plautus*, nor *Terence*, nor yet in *Aristophanes*. But on our Stage how common is it to make a Lord, a Knight, or an Alderman a Cuckold? The Schemes of Success are beaten out with great variety, and almost drawn up into a Science. How many Snares are laid for the undermining of *Vertue*, and with what Triumph is the Victory proclaim'd? The Fineness of the *Plot*, and the Life of the Entertainment often lies in these Contrivances. But the *Romans* had a different Sense of these Matters, and saw through the Consequences of them. The Government was awake upon the Theatre, and would not suffer the Abuses of Honour, and Family, to pass into Diversion. And before we part with these *Comedians* we may take notice, that there are no Smutty Songs in their *Plays*; in which the *English* are extremely Scandalous. Now to work  
up

*Love for*  
*Love.*



up their Lewdness with *Verse*, and *Musick*, doubles the Force of the Mischief. It makes it more portable and at Hand, and drives it Stronger upon Fancy and Practice.

Love Tri-  
ump. &c.

To dispatch the *Latins* altogether. *Seneca* is clean throughout the Piece, and stands generally off from the point of Love. He has no Courting unless in his *Hercules Furens*: And here the Tyrant *Lycus* addresses *Megara* very briefly, and in Modest and remote Language. In his *Thebais* *Oedipus*'s Incest is reported at large, but without any shocking Description. 'Tis granted *Phadra* speaks her Passion plainly out, and owns the strength of the Impression, and is far less prudent than in *Euripides*. But though her Thoughts appear too freely, her Language is under Discipline.

p. 14.  
Ed. Scio.

Hippol.

Let us now travel from *Italy* into *Greece*, and take a view of the Theatre at *Athens*. In this City the Stage had both its beginning and highest Improvement. *Æschylus* was the first who appear'd with any Reputation. His Genius seems Noble, and his Mind Generous, willing to transfuse it self into the Audience, and inspire them with a Spirit of Bravery. To this purpose his Stile is Pompous, Martial, and Enterprising. There is Drum and Trumpet in his Verse.

## The Immodesty

*Verse.* 'Tis apt to excite an Heroick Ardour, to awaken, warm, and push forward to Action. But his Metal is not always under Management. His Inclination for the *Sublime*; carries him too far: He is sometimes Embarrass'd with *Epithets*. His Metaphors are too stiff, and far fetch'd; and he rises rather in Sound, than in Sense. However generally speaking, his Materials are both shining and solid, and his Thoughts lofty, and uncommon. This Tragedian had always a nice regard to Good Manners. He knew corrupting the People was the greatest disservice to the Commonwealth; And that Publick Ruine was the effect of general Debauchery. For this reason he declines the Business of Amours, and declares expressly against it. Now here we can't expect any length of Testimony. His aversion to the Subject makes him touch very sparingly upon it. But in this case, there is no need of much citation. His very Omissions are Arguments, and his Evidence is the stronger for being short. That little I meet with shall be produced.

*Aristoph.*  
*Ran.* *1st.* *Orestes* was obliged by the Oracle to revenge his Father's Death in the Murther of his Mother. When he was going to kill her, he Mentions her Cruelty, but waves her Adultery. *Euripides*  
ap.

*Xenoph.*  
*263. Ed.*  
*Steph.*

*Orest. 48.*  
*Ed. Cantab*

approv'd this Reservedness and makes his *Electra* practise it upon the same occasion. *Aeschylus* in his next Play, complements his Country with a great deal of Address in the *Persons* of the *Eumenides*. They are very Gentile and Poetical in their Civilities: Among other things they wish the Virgins may all Marry and make the Country Populous: Here the *Poet* do's but just glance upon the Sub-  
ject of Love; and yet he governs the Expression with such care, that the wishes contain a Hint to Sobriety, and carry a Face of Virtue along with them.

*Euphr.*  
305.

The *Double Dealer* runs Riot upon such an Occasion as this; and gives Lord *Touchwood* a mixture of Smut and Pedantry to conclude with, and yet this Lord was one of his best Characters: But *Poets* are now grown Absolute within themselves, and may put Sense and Quality upon what Drudgeries they please. To return. *Danius* cautions his Daughters very handsomly in point of Behaviour. They were in a strange Country, and had Poverty and Dependance to struggle with: These were circumstances of Danger, and might make him the more pressing. He leaves therefore a solemn Charge with them for their Security, bids them never to subsist upon Infa-

my,

## The Immodesty

my, but to prefer their Virtue to their Life.

1x27.

340.

Μόνον φιλάει τις δ' ἱπποδάμους πατρός  
Τὸ Λαογενεῖν πρῶτον τε βίον ἅλιον.

Our *Poets* I suppose would call this Preaching, and think it a dull Business. However I can't forbear saying an honest Heathen is none of the worst Men: A very Indifferent Religion well Believed, will go a great way.

To proceed. *Sophocles* appear'd next upon the Stage, and was in earnest an Extraordinary Person. His Conduct is more Artificial, and his Style more just, than that of *Æschylus*. His Characters are well drawn, and Uniform with themselves: His *Incidents*, are often surprising, and his *Plots* unprecipitated. There is nothing but what is Great, and Solemn. Throughout. The Reasoning is well Coloured. The Figures are sometimes Bold, but not Extravagant. There are no Flights of Bombast, no Towering above Nature and Possibility: In short, nothing like *Don Sebastian's* Reigning in his, *Atomes*.

Don Se-  
bast. p. 12

This Tragedian like *Æschylus* does not often concern himself with *Amours*, and when he does, nothing can be more temperate, and decent. For example where  
the

## of the Stage.

29

the Incest of *Oedipus* is described, the Offensiveness of the Idea is screen'd off and broken by Metaphorical and distant Expressions. In another *Play*, *Creon* resolves to put *Antigone* to Death for presuming to bury *Polynices*. This Lady and *Hamon* *Creon's* Son were very far engaged; *Hamon* endeavours to dissuade his Father from *Antigones* Execution: He tells him the burying her Brother tho' against his Order, was a popular Action. And that the People would resent her being punish'd: But never so much as mentions his own Concern unless in one Line; which was so obscure, that *Creon* misunderstood him. *Antigone* amongst her other Misfortunes laments her dying Young and Single, but says not one word about *Hamon*. The Poet takes care not to bring these two Lovers upon the Stage together, for fear they might prove unmanagable? Had They been with us, they had met with kinder treatment. They might have had Interviews and Time and Freedom enough. Enough to mud their Fancy, to tarnish their Quality, and to make their Passion Scandalous. In the Relation of *Hamon's* Death, his Love is related too, and that with all the Life and *Pathos* imaginable. But the Description is within the Terms of Honour: The tendernesses are Solemn, as well as Soft: They move

*Oedip.*  
*Tyrant. Ed*  
*Steph.*

*Antig.*  
242. 244.

*Ibidi.*  
to 264.

*Ibid.* 264. to Pity and Concern, and go no farther.

*Trach.*  
348.

In his *Trachiniae* the *Chorus* owns the Force of Love next to irresistible; gently hints the Intrigues of the Gods, and then passes on to a handsome Image of the Combat between *Achelous* and *Hercules*. We see how lightly the *Poet* touches upon an amorous Theme: He glides along like a Swallow upon the Water, and skims the Surface, without dipping a Feather.

*Sophocles* will afford us no more, let us therefore take a view of *Euripides*. 'Tis the Method of this Author to decline the Singularities of the *Stage*, and to appear with an Air of Conversation. He delivers great Thoughts in Common Language, and is dress'd more like a Gentleman than a *Player*. His Distinction lies in the perspicuity of his Style; In Maxim, and Moral Reflection; In his peculiar Happiness for touching the Passions, especially that of Pity: And lastly, in exhausting the Cause, and arguing *Pro* and *Con*, upon the stretch of Reason. So much by way of Character. And as for the Matter before us, He is entirely Ours. We have had an Instance or two already in *Electra* and *Phadra*: To go on to the rest. In his *Hippolytus* He calls *Whoring*, stupidity and playing the Fool. And to be Chaste and Regular, is with him, as well as with

with *Æschylus*, Σοφοκλῆν. As much as to say, 'tis the Consequence of Sense, and right Thinking, *Phædra* when her Thoughts were embarrass'd with *Hippolytus*, endeavours to disintangle her self by Argument. She declaims with a great deal of Satir against intemperate Women; she concluded rather to die than dishonour her Husband and Stain her Family. The Blemishes of Parents, as she goes on, often stuck upon their Children, and made them appear with Disadvantage. Upon this, the *Chorus* is transported with the Vertue of her Resolution, and cries out.

οὐδ' οὐδ'. Τὸ σῶσεν ὡς ἀπανταχὲ καλὸν  
καὶ δὲ ξαν ἰδὼν ἐκ τῶν κομῶν.

*Ibid.* 232.  
233.

*How becoming a Quality is Modesty in all Places?*

*How strangely does it burnish a Character, and oblige ones Reputation?*

The Scholiast upon these verses of *Hippolytus*.

Σοὶ τὸν δὲ πλεῖστον Στίφανον ἐξ ἀκροῦ  
Λημῶν, &c.

Makes this Paraphrase. 'That a Poet's Mind should be clean and un sullied: And that the Muses being Virgins, their Performances

performances should agree with their Condition.

To proceed. *Hermione* complains against *Andromache* because she was entertain'd by her Husband: For this *Andromache* tells her she talk'd too much for a Young Woman, and discover'd her Opinion too far. *Achilles* at the first sight of *Clytemnestra*, lets her understand he was as much taken with the Sobriety of her Air, as with the rest of her fine Face and Person. She receives the Complement kindly, and commends him for commending Modesty. *Menelaus* and *Helen* after a long Absence, manage the surprize of their good Fortune handsomly. The most tender Expression stands clear of ill Meaning. Had *Osmin* parted with *Almeria* as civilly as these Two met, it had been much better. That Rant of Smut and Profaneness might have been spared. The Reader shall have some of it.

*Androm.*  
p. 303.

*Ubig. in*  
*Aulid.* p. 51

*Helen.* 273.  
278.

*Mourning*  
*Bride.* p.  
36.

O my *Almeria* ;  
What do the Damn'd endure but to despair,  
But knowing Heaven, to know it lost for ever.

Were it not for the Creed, these Poets would be cramp't in their Courtship, and Mightily at a loss for a Simile! But *Osmin* is in a wonderful Passion. And truly



truly I think his Wits are in some danger,  
as well as his Patience. You shall hear.

*What are all Wracks, and Whips, and Wheels  
to this?*

*Are they not soothing softness, sinking Ease,  
And wasting Air to this?*

*Sinking Ease, and wasting Air, I confess  
are strange Comforts: This Comparison  
is somewhat oddly equipp'd, but Lovers, like  
sick People, may say what they please.  
Almeria takes this Speech for a Pattern,  
and suits it exactly in her return;*

*O I am struck, thy Words are Bolts of Ice;  
Which shot into my Breast, now melt and  
chill me.*

*Bolts of Ice; Yes most certainly! For  
the Cold is struck up into her Head, as you  
may perceive by what follows:*

*I chatter, shake, and faint with thrilling Fears.*

By the way, 'tis a mighty wonder to  
hear a Woman Chatter! But there is no  
jesting, for the Lady is very bad. She  
won't be held up by any Means, but Crys  
out,

*—lower yet, down, down:*

D

One

# The Immodesty

One would think she was learning a Spaniel to *Sett*. But there's something behind.

———no more we'll lift our Eyes,  
But prone and dumb, Rot the firm Face of  
Earth,  
With Rivers of incessant scalding Rain.

These Figures are some of them as stiff as Statues, and put me in mind of *Sylvester's Dubartas*.

*Now when the Winters keener breath began  
To Chrystallize, the Baltick Ocean,  
To glaze the Lakes, to bridle up the Floods,  
And periwig with Snow the bald pate Woods.*

*Spanish  
Friar.  
Ep. Ded.*

I take it, the other Verses are somewhat of Kin to these, and shall leave them to Mr. Dryden's Reflection. But then as for *Soothing Softness, Sinking Ease, Wasting Air, thrilling Fears, and incessant Scalding Rain*; It puts me to another stand. For to talk a little in the way of the Stage. This Litter of *Epithets* makes the Poem look like a Bitch over-stock'd with Puppies, and sucks the Sense almost to Skin and Bone. But all this may pass in a *Play-House*: False Rhetorick and false Jewels, do well together. To return to *Euripides*. *Cassandra* in reporting the Misfortunes of  
the

the *Greeks* stops at the Adulteries of *Clytemnestra* and *Aegiala*, and gives this handsome reason for making a Halt :

Σταῖν ἀμείνων τὰ ἱκεῖα, μὴδ' ἔτι μοῖ  
Γένετ' ἀοιδὸς ἢ πρὸς ἀμύμονα γὰρ.

Troad. p.  
146.

*Foul Things are best unsaid, I am for no Muse,  
That loves to flourish on Debauchery.*

Some Things are dangerous in report, as well as practice, and many times a Disease in the Description. This *Euripides* was aware of and, manag'd accordingly, and was remarkably regular both in Style and Manners. How wretchedly do we fall short of the Decencies of Heathenism ! There's nothing more ridiculous than Modesty on our Stage. 'Tis counted an ill-bred Quality, and almost shamed out of Use. One would think Mankind were not the same, that Reason was to be read Backward, and Vertue and Vice had changed Place.

Plain Dealer, p. 21.

Provok'd Wife, p. 41.

What then ? Must Life be huddled over, Nature left imperfect, and the Humour of the Town not shown ? And pray where lies the Grievance of all This ? Must we relate whatever is done, and is every Thing fit for Representation ? Is a Man that has the Plague proper to make a

## The Immodesty

Sight of? And must he needs come Abroad when he breaths Infection, and leaves the *Tokens* upon the Company? What then, must we know nothing? Look you! All Experiments are not worth the making. 'Tis much better to be ignorant of a Disease than to catch it. Who would wound himself for Information about Pain, or smell a Stench for the sake of the Discovery? But I shall have occasion to encounter this Objection afterwards, \* and therefore shall dismiss it at present.

\* *Remarks upon Quixot.*

The *Play-House* at *Athens* has been hitherto in Order, but are there no Instances to the contrary? Does not *Aristophanes* take great Liberties, and make Women speak extraordinary Sentences? He does so. But his President signifies nothing in the case. For,

1<sup>st</sup>. We have both the Reason of the Thing, and all the Advantage of Authority on the other side. We have the Practice and Opinion of Men of much greater Sense and Learning than Himself. The best Philosophers and Poets, Criticks and Orators, both Greek and Latin, both Ancient and Modern, give the Cause against him. But *Aristophanes* his own *Plays* are sufficient to ruin his Authority. For,

1<sup>st</sup>. He discovers himself a downright Atheist. This Charge will be easily made good

good against him, by comparing his *Nubes* with his other *Plays*. The Design of his *Nubes* was to expose *Socrates*, and make a Town-Jest of him. Now this Philosopher was not only a Person of great Sense and Probity, but was likewise suppos'd to refine upon the Heathen Theology, to throw off the Fabulous part of it, and to endeavour to bring it back to the Standard of Natural Religion. And therefore *Justin Martyr*, and some others of the *Fathers*, look'd on him as a Person of no Pagan Belief, and thought he suffer'd for the Unity of the God-Head. This Man, *Aristophanes* makes fine sport with, as he fancies: He puts him in a Fool's Coat, and then points at him. He makes *Socrates* instruct his Disciple *Strepsiades* in a new Religion, and tell him that *he did not own the Gods in the vulgar Notion*. He brings him in elsewhere, affirming, that the *Clouds are the only Deities*. Which is the same Lash which *Juvenal* gives the *Jews*, because they Worshipped but one single Sovereign Being.

*Nub. Act. 1.*  
Sc. 3. P.  
104. Ed.  
Amstel.

*Nil prater Nubes & Cæli numen adorant.*

Sat. 14

*Socrates* goes on with his Lecture of Divinity, and declares very roundly, that there is no such thing as *Jupiter*. Afterwards he advances farther, and endeavours

P. 106.

to get *Strepsiades* under Articles to acknowledge no other Gods, but *Chaos*, the *Clouds*, and the *Tongue*. At last the *Poet* brings the *Philosopher* to publick Penance for his Singularities. He ſets Fire to his *School* for teaching Young People (as he pretends) to diſpute againſt Law and Juſtice; for advancing Atheiſtick Notions, and Burleſquing the Religion of the Country.

Aſt. 5. p.  
176.

That *Socrates* was no *Atheiſt*, is clear from Inſtances enough. To mention but one: The Confidence he had in his *Dæmon*, or *Genius*, by which he govern'd his Affairs, puts it beyond all diſpute. However 'tis plain *Ariſtophanes* was not of his Religion. The *Comedian* was by no means for correcting the Common Perſwaſion. So that he muſt either be an Orthodox Heathen, or nothing at all. Let us ſee then with what Reſpect he treats the received *Divinities*. This *Play*, where one would not expect it, diſcovers ſomewhat of his Devotion. In the beginning of it *Phidippides*, who was a ſort of *New-Market Spark*, ſwears by *Jocky Neptune*, that he had a ſtrange Kindneſs for his Father *Strepsiades*. Upon this the Old Man replies, *No Jocky, if you Love me; that Deity has almoſt undone me.* This was making ſomewhat bold with *Neptune*, who was *Jupiter's* Brother, *Soveraign* of a whole *Element*, and had no leſs

Plat. Apol.  
Socrat.

Nub. p. 86.

less than the Third share of the Universe! Certainly *Aristophanes* had no venture at Sea, or else must think the *Trident* signified but very little. But this is meer Ceremony to what follows. In his first *Play*, *Plutus* pretends he had a mind to oblige only Men of Probity, but *Jupiter* had made him blind, on purpose that he might not distinguish Honest Men from Knaves: For to be plain, *Jupiter* had a Pique against Good People. Towards the end of this *Comedy*, *Mercury* is abused by *Cario*, and acts a ridiculous, and lessening part himself. Afterwards he complains heavily that since *Plutus* was cured of his Blindness, the Business of Sacrificing fell off, and the Gods were ready to starve. This *Mercury* has the same ill Usage with the *Poets*, *Knaves*, *Informers*, and *Lewd Women*; From all this stuff put together, his meaning is pretty plain, *viz.* That Religion was no better than an Imposture supported by Art, and Ignorance: And that when Men's Understandings were awake, and their Eyes a little open, they would have more Discretion than to be at any expence about the Gods.

This I take to be part of the Moral of his Fable. If we look farther into him, we shall see more of his Mind. His *Rana* makes Merry with the Heathen Scheme of

## The Immodesty

Heaven and Hell. Here *Charon* and the *Stygian Frogs* are brought in Comically enough. And that you may understand his Opinion more perfectly, we are told, that he that Bilks his *Catamite* after a *Sodomitical Abuse*, is thrown into the Common-shore of *Hades*. And what Company do you think he is lodg'd with? Why with those who Perjure themselves, with those who kick their Fathers and Mothers? It seems in the *Poet's* Justice a Man might as good be false to his Oath, as to his Lewdness. To disappoint the *Stews*, is every jot as great a Crime; as to fly in the Face of Nature, and outrage our Parents. His Quartering his Malefactors thus critically, was without question on purpose to Banter the Perswasion of future Punishment. In the same *Play*, *Xanthias* bids *Æacus* answer him by *Jove*, "Ὁς ἡμῖν ἰστὶ δμομαστῖας. This little Scoundrel of a Slave has the Manners to make *Jupiter's* Quality no better than his own. To go on with him: In his *Aves* he speaks out to purpose. Here *Pisthetærus* tells *Epops*, that if the *Birds* would build a Castle in the Air, they might intercept the Fumes of the Sacrifices, and starve the Gods, unless they would come to, and be Tributary. It seems the *Birds* had very good Pretences to execute this project; for they were

Ran. p.  
188.



were ancients than *Jupiter* and *Saturn*,  
and Govern'd before the Gods. And to  
speak truth, were more capable of the  
Function. Their Adviser goes on to in- *p. 536.*  
form them, that after they had built *p. 538. 546.*  
their Pensile City, and fortified the Air,  
their next business was to demand their  
ancient Sovereignty: If *Jupiter* refused  
to quit, they were to declare a Holy War  
against Him, and the rest of the Confe-  
derate Gods, and to cut off the Commu-  
nication between Heaven and Earth.  
*Pisthaterus* grows very warm in his  
new Interest, and swears by *Jove*, that *p. 542.*  
Men ought to Sacrifice to the *Birds*, and  
not to *Jupiter*. And if things came  
to a Rupture, and *Jupiter* grew Trouble- *p. 582.*  
some, he undertakes to send a Detach-  
ment of Eagles against Him; with Or-  
ders to storm his Palace with Flambeaux,  
and fire it about his Ears. At last to  
prevent the Calamities of a War, *Hercules* *Ibid.*  
proposes an Accommodation, and is wil-  
ling *Jupiter* should Resign. *Neptune* calls  
him a Block-head for his pains, because he  
was Heir at *Law*, and after *Jupiter's* De-  
cease, was of Course to succeed in his Do-  
minions: Once more, and I have done:  
In *Eirene*, *Trygaus* speaks in a menacing  
way. That unless *Jupiter* gave him Satis-  
faction in his Business, he would inform *p. 602.*  
against

againſt Him as a diſaffected Perſon, and a  
*Eiren. 616.* betrayer of the Liberties of Greece. I  
 might add many other Inſtances, and  
 ſome more Scandalous than any I have  
 mentioned; But theſe are ſufficient to ſhew  
 the Author's Sentiment: And is it any  
 wonder an Atheiſt ſhould miſbehave him-  
 ſelf in point of Modeſty? What can we  
 expect leſs from thoſe who laugh at the  
 Being of a God, at the Doctrines of Pro-  
 vidence, and the Diſtinctions of Good and  
 Evil? A *Sceptick* has no notion of Con-  
 ſcience, no Reliſh for Vertue, nor is under  
 any Moral reſtraints from Hope or Fear.  
 Such a one has nothing to do but to con-  
 ſult his Eaſe, and gratifie his Vanity, and  
 fill his Pocket. But how theſe Ends are  
 compaſſed, he has no ſqueamiſhneſs, or  
 Scruples about it. 'Tis true when the  
 Methods of Lewdneſs will take, they  
 are generally moſt agreeable. This way  
 ſuits their Talent, and ſcreens their Prac-  
 tice, and obliges their Malice. For no-  
 thing is a greater Eye-ſore to theſe Men,  
 than Vertue and Regularity. What a  
 pleaſure is it then to be admired for Miſ-  
 chief, to be reveng'd on Religion, and to  
 ſee Vice proſper and improve under our  
 Hands! To return: Beſide *Ariſtophanes's*  
 Atheiſm, I have a Second Objection to  
 his Authority, and that is want of Judg-  
 ment

ment. If we examine his *Plays* we shall find his Characters improper, or ununiform; either wrong at first, or unsteady in the Right. For the purpose. In his *Nubes*, A. 3. S. 3. p. 146, 150. He puts dirty expressions in the Mouth of his Man of Probity, makes him declaim viciouſly against Vice, and correct Scurrility with Impudence; Now what can be more idle and senseless, than such Conduct as this? Especially when this *Justus* as he calls him, had told them in the beginning of his speech, that People used to be well slash'd for such Fooling, when Government and Discipline were in their due Force. The *Chorus* of his *Rana* slides p. 142. into the same Inconsistency of Precept, and Practice. Farther, in the Progress of this *Play*; *Aeschylus* falls a rallying contrary to his Humour, and jests away his own Arguments at a very unreasonable Juncture, when he was disputing for no less prize than the Laureatship. This *Tragedian* after he had play'd a p. 242. little with the Story of *Bellerophon*, goes on in the same strain; And charges *Enripides* that he had furnish'd all sorts of People with Sawciness and Prattle. The *Schools* and *Academies* were spoil'd by this means; So that the Boys were often whip'd, and the Boatswains drubb'd, for their

p. 244.

their Chattering. These Comical Levities come with an ill Grace from *Æschylus*. His Character was quite different both in Reality, and in the *Play* before us. He is all along represented as a Person of a serious Temper, of a reserv'd Loftiness, Cholerick, and tender of his Honour to an Excess, and almost in a rage at the Affront of a Rival, and being forc'd to enter the Lists with *Euripides*. The case standing thus, neither the Man, nor the Business, would admit of Drolling. Another Instance of his want of Conduct we have in his *Concionatores*. Here *Blepyrus* and some others of his Legislative Assembly, talk at a very dirty insipid rate. The Lowest of the *Mob*, can hardly jest with less Wit, and more Lewdness. And to make their Discourse more remarkable; These douty Members were just going to the *House*, and had their Heads full of the Good of the Nation, when they entertain'd themselves thus decently. And are these little Buffoons fit to consult *de Arduis Regni, &c.* to give Authority to Law, and Rules for publick Life? Do's Ribaldry and Nonsense become the Dignity of their Station, and the Solemnity of their Office? To make his *Parliament-Men* play the Fool thus egregiously, must needs have a great deal

p. 700.

p. 708.

deal of *Decorum*, and State-Policy in the Contrivance; And is just as wise as if a *Painter* should have Drawn them in the Habit of *Jack-Puddings*, and *Mery-Andrews*. But *Aristophanes* has still higher Flights of Absurdity. He won't so much as spare the Gods, but makes them act these little Parts of Clownishness and Infamy. *Bacchus* and *Hercules* in his *Rana* are forced to talk Smut and rally like *Link-boys*, and do almost all the Tricks of *Bartholomew-Fair*. To mention something that will bear the quoting. *Bacchus* enquires of *Hercules* the readiest way to *Hades*, or the other World. He bids him either Hang, or Poyson himself, and he cannot miss the Road. This is *Hercules's* Humour to a Tittle! And represents him as much to the Life, as an *Ape* would to do the *Grand Signior* at a publick Audience! This with a short Sentence or two of Lewdness, is the hardest of *Hercules* his Usage: And 'tis well he escap'd so; for *Bacchus* is treated much worse. He appears under the disadvantages of a Clownish Debauchee, and a Coward. And is terribly afraid of a *Spectre*. When he comes before *Eacus*, this Judge is very rough with him; and tries his pretences to a Deity by *Bastinado*: *Bacchus* howls in the drubbing and had almost spoil'd all.

*Rana. p.*  
182. p. 185.

p. 192, 194.  
196.

*AB 2. Sc. 6.*

Now

## The Immodeſty

Now do's this paulty Behaviour agree with the Heathen Theology, with the Common Opinion concerning *Bacchus* and *Hercules*? Do's a *Blow-Cap* and a *Ladle*, become the Sons of *Jupiter* and the Objects of Religious Worship? Thoſe who at the loweſt, were counted the Conquerors of the World, and more than Men both by Birth and Enterprize? *Sophocles* and *Euripides* make theſe two Perſons manage at a quite different rate of Decency. 'Tis no defence to ſay, *Ariſtophanes* wrote Comedy, and ſo was obliged to make his Scenes more diverting. This excuſe I ſay, is defective; for a Comedian ought to imitate Life and Probability, no leſs than a Tragedian. To Metamorphoſe Characters, and preſent Contradiſtions to Common Belief, is to write *Farce* inſtead of *Plays*. Such Comedians like *Theſpis* ought to have a travelling Stage, and take the Air with *Porcupines* and *Dromedaries*. If 'tis ſaid that Gravity and Greatneſs doſ not ſuit the Complection and Entertainment of Comedy. To this I anſwer, that therefore the Perſons ſhould be choſen accordingly. They ſhould have nothing in their known Humor, and Condition too Noble, and ſolemn for Triſling. 'Tis *Horace's* advice.

*Aut famam sequere, aut convenientia fingi*  
*Scriptor. De Art. Poet.*

Let us remember that Operations always resemble the Nature from whence they flow. Great Persons should therefore have a correspondent Behaviour assign'd them. To make *Beings* much Superior to the Biggest of Mankind, talk below the Least; is absurd and ridiculous. This *Aristophanes* seems sensible of, in his defence of *Æschylus*. Here *Euripides* objects to *Æschylus*, that he was too rumbling, noisy, and bombastick, over affecting that which *Horace* calls

*Rene p.*  
*242.*

*Ampullas, & sesquipedalia Verba.*

To this *Æschylus* Answers, that the Thoughts, and Designs of *Heroes* must be deliver'd in Expressions proportioned to their Greatness. It being likely that the Demi-Gods spoke up to their Dignity and Stature: And as they were distinguish'd by the richness of their Habit, so they had a more Magnificent Language than other Mortals. To this *Euripides* replies nothing; from whence you may conclude the *Poet* thought the Apology not unreasonable. In short, *Aristophanes* had

*Aut*

## The Immodesty

*Rena A. 1.  
Sc. 1. Con-  
cious.*

had Sense, but he does not always use it. He is not equal, and uniform. Sometimes you have him flat and foolish a good while together. And where he has Spirit, 'tis oftentimes lavished away to little purpose. His Buffoonery is commonly too strong for his Judgment. This makes him let fly his Jest without regard to Person or Occasion: And thus by Springing the *Game* too soon, the Diversion is lost. I could make several other Material Objections against the Conduct of his *Plays*; But this being not necessary, I shall observe in the

*Rena p.  
238.*

3d. Place. That notwithstanding the scandalous Liberty for which *Aristophanes* is so remarkable; yet in his Lucid Intervals, when Sense and Sobriety return upon him, he pronounces against his own Practice. In the contest between *Aeschylus* and *Euripides*, *Bacchus* is made the Umpire of the Controversie. *Aeschylus* begins with a Question, and asks *Euripides* what 'tis which makes a *Poet* admir'd? He answers. 'Tis for the address of his Conduct, and the handsome Turns of Morality in his Poems. 'Tis because his performance has a tendency to form the Audience to Vertue, and Improvement. *Aeschylus* demands of him farther; But suppose you debauched the Age,



Age, and made an Honest and a Brave People Lewd, and good for nothing, what do you deserve then? Here *Bacchus* interposes, and crys out, What does he deserve? A Halter! Pray don't ask so plain a Question. And afterwards we are told that *Poets* are valuable only for describing Things useful, in Life and Religion; for polishing Inventions; and setting off great Examples with Lustre, and Advantage. In the Progress of the Dispute, *Æschylus* p. 240. taxes *Euripides* with being too uncautious in his Representations; and tells him, that *Poets* ought to conceal that which is vicious in Story; and entertain with nothing but Vertue and Sobriety: He goes on Reprimanding *Euripides* for his *Dramatick* Incests, Strumpets, and Amours: And as for himself, to his best remembrance, he never brought any Love-Intrigues upon the Stage. p. 242.  
244.

This is a very significant Expostulation; and contains very good Rules for the Tryal of the *Muses*: But if the *English Stage* should be obliged to this Test, *Aristophanes* must set Fire to it, and that with much more Reason than to *Socrates* his School. Now that *Æschylus* spoke *Aristophanes*'s Sense, is pretty plain: For first; As to the Business of Love, *Aristophanes* always declines it; He never patches up a  
E Play

## The Immodesty

p. 255  
267.

*Play with Courtship, and Whining*, though he wrote nothing but *Comedy*. In the next place the *Chorus*, which is usually the *Poet's* Interpreter, speaks honourably of *Æschylus* even to a Preference; And at last Judge *Bacchus* gives Sentence for him.

Thus we see *Aristophanes* Confutes his own Lewdness, and comes in Evidence against himself. This, with the other two Exceptions I have made good against him, are sufficient to take off the force of the *Precedent*, and make him an insignificant Authority.

To what I have observ'd from the *Stage* of the Ancients, I could add the Authorities of *Aristotle*, and *Quintilian*, both extraordinary Persons, but I shall reserve their Testimony till afterwards.

To come Home, and near our own Times: The *English* Theatre from *Queen Elizabeth* to *King Charles II.* will afford us something not inconsiderable to our purpose.

As for *Shakespear*, he is too guilty to make an Evidence: But I think he gains not much by his Misbehaviour; He has commonly *Plautus's Fate*, where there is most Smut, there is least Sense.

*Ben. Johnson* is much more reserved in his *Plays*, and declares plainly for Modesty in his *Discoveries*; some of his Words are these.

A

A Just Writer, whom he calls a *True Artificer*, will avoid *Obscene* and *Effeminate Phrase*. Where *Manners and Fashions* are Corrupted, Language is so too. The excess of Feasts and Apparel, are the Notes of a sick State; and the Wantonness of Language, of a sick Mind. A little after, he returns to the Argument, and applies his Reasoning more particularly to the Stage. Poetry, (says he) and Picture, both behold Pleasure and Profit, as their common Object, but should abstain from all base Pleasures, lest they should wholly err from their End; And while they seek to better Men's Minds, destroy their Manners: Insolent and Obscene Speeches, and Jest upon the best Men, are most likely to excite Laughter. But this is truly leaping from the Stage to the Tumbrill again, reducing all Wit to the Original Dung-Cart. More might be cited to this purpose, but that may serve for an other Occasion: In the mean time I shall go on to Beaumont and Fletcher.

Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* is remarkably Moral, and a sort of Exhortation to Chastity. This Play met with ill Judges; 'twas hiss'd before half Acted, and seems to have suffer'd on the account of its Innocence. Soon after, Ben. Johnson and Beaumont appear, and justify the Author in a Copy of Verses. And as Beaumont

Discov. p. 700.

p. 701.

p. 706.

717.

Beaumont's &c. Works.

## The Immodesty

commends Modesty in *Fletcher*, so he is commended himself by Mr. Earl for the same Quality.

*Such Passions, such Expressions meet my Eye,  
Such Wit untainted with Obscenity.*

Ibid.

And as I remember *Jaspar Main* has some stroaks to the same purpose. *Fletcher* is still more full for the Cause. Indeed nothing can be more express. He delivers himself by way of Prologue; where the Poet speaks in his own Person. The Prologue to the *Woman-Hater*, very frankly lets the Audience know what they are to expect. *If there be any amongst you* (says he) *that come to hear Lascivious Scenes, let them depart; For I do pronounce this, to the utter discomfort of all Two-penny Gallery Men, you shall hear no Bawdry in it.* We find in those days Smut was the expectation of a Coarse Palate, and relish'd by none but Two-penny Customers. In the *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, part of the Prologue runs thus. *They were banish'd the Theatre at Athens, and from Rome hiss'd, that brought Parasites on the Stage with Apish Actions, or Fools with uncivil Habits, or Courtizans with immodest Words.* Afterwards Prologue, who represents a Person, gives us more to the same purpose.

— Fly

——— Fly far from hence  
*All private Taxes, immodest Phrases,  
 Whatever may but look like Vicious.  
 For wicked Mirth never true Pleasure brings;  
 For honest Minds are pleas'd with honest  
 things.*

I have quoted nothing but Comedy in  
 this Author. The Coronation is another ;  
 And the Prologue tells you there is

*No Undermirth, such as does lard the Scene,  
 For coarse Delight, the Language here is clean.  
 And confident our Poet bad me say,  
 He'll bate you but the Folly of a Play.  
 For which, altho' dull Souls his Pen despise,  
 Who think it yet too early to be wise.  
 The Nobles yet will thank his Muse, at least  
 Excuse him, 'cause his Thought aim'd at the  
 best.*

Thus these Poets are in their Judgments  
 clearly ours. 'Tis true, their Hand was  
 not always steady. But thus much may  
 be averr'd, that *Fletcher's* latter Plays are the  
 most inoffensive. This is either a sign of  
 the Poet's Reformation ; or that the ex-  
 ceptionable Passages belong'd to *Beaumont*,  
 who died first.

To these Authorities of our own Nati-  
 on, I shall add a considerable Testimony

## The Immodesty

Theodore.  
Ed. Roven.  
Ep. Ded.

out of Mr. *Corneille*. This Author was sensible that though the Expression of his *Theodore* was altogether unsmutty, 'Yet the bare Idea of Prostitution uneffected, 'shock'd the Audience, and made the Play 'miscarry. The *Poet* protests he took great 'care to alter the Natural Complexion of 'the Image, and to convey it decently to 'the Fancy; and deliver'd only some part 'of the History as inoffensively as possible. 'And after all his Screening and Conduct, 'the Modesty of the Audience would not 'endure that little, the Subject forced him 'upon. He is positive, The Comedies 'St. *Augustine* declaim'd against, were not 'such as the *French*. For theirs are not 'Spectacles of Turpitude, as that Father 'justly calls those of his Time. The '*French*, generally speaking, containing 'nothing but examples of Innocence, Piety 'and Vertue.

In this Citation we have the Opinion of the *Poet*, the Practice of the *French Theatre*, and the Sense of that *Nation*, and all very full to our purpose.

To conclude this *Chapter*. By what has been offer'd, it appears, that the *Present English Stage* is superlatively Scandalous. It exceeds the Liberties of all Times and Countries. It has not so much as the poor Plea of a *Precedent*, to which most other ill Things

Things may claim a pretence. 'Tis most-ly meer Discovery and Invention: A new World of *Vice* found out, and planted with all the Industry imaginable. *Aristophanes* himself, how bad soever in other respects, does not amplify, and flourish, and run through all the Topicks of Lewdness like these Men. The *Miscellany Poems* are likewise horribly Licentious. They are sometimes Collections from Antiquity, and often the worst Parts of the worst Poets. And to mend the Matter, the Christian *Translation* is more nauseous than the *Pagan Original*: Such Stuff I believe was never seen, and suffer'd before. In a word, If Poverty and Diseases, the Dishonour of Families, and the Debauching of Kingdoms, are such valuable Advantages, then I confess these Books deserve encouragement: But if the Case is otherwise, I humbly conceive the Proceeding should be so too.

## C H A P. II.

*The Profaneness of the Stage.*

**A**Nother Instance of the Disorders of the Stage, is their *Profaneness*; This Charge may come under these two Particulars.

1st. *Their Cursing and Swearing.*

2dly. *Their Abuse of Religion and Holy Scripture.*

1st. *Their Cursing and Swearing.*

What is more frequent than their Wishes of Hell and Confusion, Devils and Diseases, all the Plagues of this World, and the next, to each other? And as for Swearing; 'tis used by all Persons, and upon all Occasions: By Heroes, and Paltrons; by Gentlemen, and Clowns; Love, and Quarrels; Success, and Disappointment; Temper, and Passion, must be varnish'd, and set off with *Oaths*. At some times, and with some *Poets*, Swearing is no ordinary Relief. It stands up in the room of Sense, gives Spirit to a flat Expression, and makes a Period Musical and Round. In short, 'tis almost all the Rhetorick,



rick, and Reason some People are Masters of: The manner of performance is different. Sometimes they mince the Matter; change the Letter, and keep the Sense, as if they had a mind to steal a Swearing, and break the Commandment without Sin. At another time, the Oaths are clipt, but not so much within the Ring, but that the *Image and Superscription* are visible. These Expedients I conceive are more for variety, than Conscience: For when the fit comes on them, they make no difficulty of Swearing at length. Instances of all these kinds may be met with in the *Old Batchelour*, *Double Dealer*, and *Love for Love*. And to mention no more, *Don Quixot*, the *Provok'd Wife*, and the *Relapse*, are particularly Rampant and Scandalous. The *English Stage* exceed their Predecessors in this, as well as other Branches of Immorality. *Shakespear* is comparatively sober, *Ben. Johnson* is still more regular; And as for *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, in their *Plays*, they are commonly Profligate Persons that Swear, and even those are reprov'd for't. Besides, the Oaths are not so full of Hell and Defiance, as in the Moderns.

So much for matter of Fact: And as for point of Law, I hope there needs not many Words to prove Swearing a Sin: For what is more provoking than contempt

Gad for  
God.

## The Profaneness

tempt, and what Sin more contemptuous than common Swearing? What can be more Insolent and Irreligious, than to bring in God to attest our Trifles, to give Security for our Follies, and to make part of our Diversion? To play with Majesty and Omnipotence in this manner, is to render it cheap and despicable. How can such Customs as these consist with the Belief of Providence or Revelation? The *Poets* are of all People most to blame. They want even the Plea of *Bullies* and *Sharpers*. There's no Rencounters, no starts of Passion, no sudden Accidents to discompose them. They swear in Solitude and cool Blood, under Thought and Deliberation, for Business and for Exercise: This is a terrible Circumstance; It makes all *Malice Prepenſe*, and enflames the Guilt, and the Reckoning.

And if Religion signifies nothing, (as I am afraid it does with some People) there is Law, as well as Gospel, against Swearing. 3. *Jac.* 1. *cap.* 21. is expressly against the *Play-House*. It runs thus.

**F**OR the preventing and aboiding of the great abuse of the holy Name of God in Stage-Plays, Enterludes, &c. Be it enacted by our Sovereign Lord, &c. That if at any time, or times, after the End of this present Session of Parliament

ment, any Person or Persons do, or shall, in any Stage-Play, Enterlude, Shew, &c. Jestingly or profanely, speak or use the Holy Name of God, or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghost, or of the Trinity, which are not to be spoken, but with Fear and Reberence; shall forfeit for every such offence, by him or them committed, ten pound: The one Moiety thereof to the King's Majesty, his Heirs, and Successors; the other Moiety thereof to him, or them, that will sue for the same in any Court of Record at Westminster, wherein no escoin, protection, or wager of Law shall be allowed.

By this *Act* not only direct Swearing, but all vain Invocation of the Name of God is forbidden. This *Statute* well executed would mend the *Poets*, or sweep the *Box*: And the *Stage* must either reform, or not thrive upon Profaneness

3ly. Swearing in the *Playhouse* is an ungentlemanly, as well as an unchristian Practice. The *Ladies* make a considerable part of the *Audience*. Now Swearing before Women is reckon'd a Breach of good Behaviour; and therefore a civil Atheist will forbear it. The Custom seems to go upon this Presumption; that the Impressions of Religion are strongest in Women, and more generally spread. And  
that

## The Profaneness

that it must be very disagreeable to them, to hear the Majesty of God treated with so little respect. Besides, Oaths are a boisterous and tempestuous sort of Conversation; generally the effects of Passion, and spoken with Noise, and Heat. Swearing looks like the beginning of a Quarrel, to which Women have an aversion; as being neither armed by Nature, nor disciplin'd by Custom for such rough Disputes. A Woman will start at a Soldier's Oath, almost as much as at the Report of his Pistol: And therefore a well Bred Man will no more Swear than Fight in the Company of Ladies.

A Second Branch of the Profaneness of the Stage is their Abuse of Religion, and *Holy Scripture*. And here sometimes they don't stop short of Blasphemy. To cite all that might be Collected of this kind would be tedious. I shall give the *Reader* enough to justify the Charge, and I hope to abhor the Practice.

To begin with the *Mock-Astrologer*. In the First *Act*, the *Scene* is a *Chappel*, And that the Use of such Consecrated places may be the better understood, the time is taken up in Courtship, Raillery, and Ridiculing Devotion. *Jacinta* takes her turn among the rest. She interrupts *Theodosia*, and cries out: *Why Sister, Sister---will you pray? what injury have I ever done you that you shou'd pray in my Company?*  
Wild.

*Wildblood* swears by *Mahomet*, rallies smut-  
tily upon the other World, and gives the  
preference to the Turkish Paradise. This p. 37.  
Gentleman to encourage *Jacinta* to a Com-  
pliance in Debauchery, tells her, *Heaven* p. 37.  
*is all Eyes and no Tongue*. That is, it sees  
Wickedness but conceals it. He Courts  
much at the same rate a little before. *When* p. 34.  
*a Man comes to a great Lady, he is fain to*  
*approach her with Fear, and Reverence, me-*  
*thinks there's something of Godliness in't*.  
Here you have the Scripture burlesqu'd, Hebr. 12.  
and the Pulpit-Admonition apply'd to  
Whoring. Afterwards *Jacinta* out of her  
great Breeding and Christianity, swears  
by *Alla*, and *Mahomet*, and makes a Jest p. 34-35.  
upon Hell. *Wildblood* tells his Man that  
*such undesigning Rogues as he, make a Drudge*  
*of poor Providence*. And *Maskall*, to show  
his proficiency under his Masters, replies  
to *Ballamy*, who would have had him  
told a Lie. *Sir, upon the Faith of a Sinner, p. 35.*  
*you have had my last Lie already. I have not*  
*one more to do me Credit, as I hope to be sav-*  
*ed, Sir.*

In the close of the *Play*, they make  
sport with Apparitions and Fiends. One  
of the Devils sneezes, upon this they give  
him the Blessing of the Occasion, and con-  
clude *he has got cold by being too long out* p. 39.  
*of the Fire.*

The

## The Profaneness

The Orphan lays the Scene in Christendom, and takes the same care of Religion. *Castalio* Complements his Mistress to Adoration.

Orph. p. 20. *No Tongue my Pleasure and my Pain can tell  
'Tis Heaven to have thee, and without thee Hell.*

*Polydor*, when upon the attempt to debauch *Monimia*, puts up this Ejaculation,

p. 31. *Blessed Heaven, assist me but in this dear Hour.*

Thus the Stage worships the true God in Blasphemy, as the *Lindians* did *Hercules* by Cursing and throwing Stones. This *Polydor* has another Flight of Profaneness, but that has got a certain Protection, and therefore must not be disturb'd.

*La Ram.*

In the *Old Batchelour*, *Vain-love* asks *Belmour*, *Could you be content to go to Heaven?*

p. 19.

*Bell. Hum, not immediately in my Conscience, not heartily.*—— This is playing I take it with Edge-Tools. To go to Heaven in jest, is the way to go to Hell in earnest. In the *Fourth Act*, Lewdness is represented with that Gaiety, as if the Crime was purely imaginary, and lay only in ignorance and preciseness. *Have you thoroughly consider'd* (says *Fondlewife*) *how detestable, how heinous, and how crying a Sin*

the

the Sin of Adultery is? Have you weighed I say? For it is a very weighty Sin: And altho' it may lie——yet thy Husband must also bear P. 28. his part; For thy Iniquity will fall on his Head. I suppose this fit of Buffoonry and Profaneness, was to settle the Conscience of young Beginners, and to make the Terrors of Religion insignificant. *Belmour* desires *Letitia* to give him leave to swear by her Eyes and her Lips: He kisses the Strumpet, and tells her, *Eternity was in that Moment.* La. P. 31. *Letitia* is horribly Profane in her Apology to her Husband; but having the Stage-Protection of Smut for her Guard, we must let her alone. *Fondlewife* stalks under P. 38. the same shelter, and abuses a plain Text of Scripture to an impudent Meaning. A little before, *Letitia* when her Intrigue P. 39. with *Belmour* was almost discover'd, supports her self with this Consideration. *All my comfort lies in his Impudence, and Heaven be prais'd, he has a considerable Portion.* This is the Play-House Grace, and thus P. 39. Lewdness is made a part of Devotion! There's another Instance still behind: 'Tis that of *Sharper* to *Vain-Love*, and lies thus.

*I have been a kind of God-father to you, Jonder: I have promis'd and vow'd something in your Name, which I think you are bound Id. 49. to perform. For Christians to droll upon their*

## The Profaneness

their Baptism is somewhat extraordinary: But since the Bible can't escape, 'tis the less wonder to make bold with the *Cathism*.

*Double*

*Dealer.*

34-

p. 36.

p. 55.

p. 40.

In the *Double Dealer*, Lady *Plyant* cries out *Jesu*, and talks *Smut* in the same Sentence. Sir. *Paul Plyant*, whom the Poet dubb'd a Fool when he made him a Knight, talks very Piously! *Blessed be Providence, a poor unworthy Sinner, I am mightily beholden to Providence*: And the same Word is thrice repeated upon an odd occasion. The meaning must be, that *Providence* is a ridiculous Supposition, and that none but Block-heads pretend to Religion. But the Poet can discover himself farther if need be. Lady *Froth* is pleas'd to call *Jehu* a *Hackney-Coachman*. Upon this, *Brisk* replies, *If Jehu was a Hackney-Coachman, I am answer'd,——you may put that into the Marginal Notes though, to prevent Criticisms——only make it with a small Asterism and say, —— Jehu was formerly a Hackney-Coachman*. This for a heavy Piece of Profaneness, is no doubt thought a lucky one, because it Burlesques the Text, and the Comment, all under one. I could go on with the *Double Dealer*, but he'll come in my way afterwards, and so I shall part with him at present. Let us now take a view of *Don Sebastian*. And here the



the Reader can't be long unfurnish'd. *Dorax* shall speak first:

*Shall I trust Heaven——  
With my Revenge? then where's my Satisfac-  
tion?*

*No, it must be my own, I scorn a Proxy.* *Sebast. p. 92*

But *Dorax* was a Renegado, what then? He had renounc'd Christianity, but not Providence. Besides, such hideous Sentences ought not to be put in the Mouth of the Devil. For that which is not fit to be heard, is not fit to be spoken. But to some People an Atheistical Rant is as good as a Flourish of Trumpets. To proceed; *Antonio* tho a profess'd Christian, mends the matter very little. He is looking on a Lot which he had drawn for his Life: This proving unlucky, after the preamble of a Curse or two, he calls it,

*As black as Hell, another lucky saying! I think the Devil's in me: —good again,  
I cannot speak one Syllable but tends  
To Death or to Damnation.* *Id. p. 100*

Thus the Poet prepares his Bullies for the other World! Hell and Damnation are strange entertaining Words upon the Stage! Were it otherwise, the Sense in  
P these

## The Profaneness

these Lines, would be almost as bad as the Conscience. The *Poem* warms and rises in the working; and the next Flight is extremely remarkable:

p. 47.

*Not the last sounding could surprize me more,  
That summons drowsy Mortals to their Doom,  
When call'd in hast they fumble for their  
Limbs.*

Id. p. 83.  
Exod. xiii.  
4.

Very Solemnly and Religiously express'd! *Lucian* and *Celsus* could not have ridiculed the Resurrection better! Certainly the Poet never expects to be there. Such a light Turn would have agreed much better to a Man who was in the Dark, and was feeling for his Stockings. But let those who talk of *Fumbling* for their Limbs, take care they don't find them too fast. In the Fourth Act, *Mustapha* dates his *Exaltation to Tumult*, from the second Night of the Month *Abib*. Thus you have the Holy Text abused by Captain *Tom*; and the Bible torn by the Rabble! The Design of this Liberty I can't understand, unless it be to make *Mustapha* as considerable as *Moses*; and the prevalence of a Tumult, as much a Miracle as the Deliverance out of *Egypt*. We have heard this Author hitherto in his *Characters*, let us hear him now in his own Person. In his *Dedication of Aurenge Zebe* he is so hardy

as to affirm, That *he who is too lightly reconciled after high Provocation, may Recommend himself to the World for a Christian, but I should hardly trust him for a Friend.* And why is a Christian not fit to make a Friend of? Are the Principles of Christianity defective, and the Laws of it ill contriv'd? Are the Interests and Capacities of Mankind over-look'd? Did our Great Master bind us to Disadvantage, and make our Duty our Misfortune? And did he grudge us all the Pleasures and Securities of Friendship? Are not all these horrid Suppositions? Are they not a flat Contradiction to the Bible, and a Satyr on the Attributes of the Deity? Our Saviour tells us, we must *forgive until Seventy times Seven*; That is, we must never be tired out of Clemency and Good Nature. He has taught us to pray for the Forgiveness of our own Sins, only upon the Condition of Forgiving others. Here is no exception upon the Repetition of the Fault, or the Quality of the Provocation. Mr. Dryden, to do him right, does not dispute the Precept. He confesses this is the way to be a Christian; but for all that, he *should hardly trust him for a Friend.* And why so? Because the Italian Proverb says, *He <sup>ibid.</sup> that forgives the second time is a Fool.* This Lewd Proverb comes in for Authority,

## The Profaneness

and is a piece of very Pertinent Blasphemy ! Thus, in some Peoples *Logick*, one Proof from Atheism, is worth Ten from the *New Testament*. But here the *Poet* argues no better than he Believes. For most certainly, a Christian of all others is best qualified for Friendship : For he that loves his Neighbour as himself, and carries Benevolence and Good Nature beyond the Heights of Philosophy : He that is not govern'd by Vanity, or Design : He that prefers his Conscience to his Life, and has Courage to maintain his Reason : He that is thus qualified, must be a good Friend : And he that falls short, is no good Christian. And since the *Poet* is pleas'd to find fault with Christianity, let us examine his own Scheme. *Our Minds* (says he) *are perpetually wrought on by the Temperament of our Bodies, which makes me suspect they are nearer Allied than either our Philosophers, or School-Divines will allow them to be.* The meaning is, he suspects our Souls are nothing but Organiz'd Matter : Or, in plain English, our *Souls* are nothing but our Bodies ; and then when the Body dies, you may guess what becomes of them ! Thus the Authorities of Religion are weaken'd, and the prospect of the other World almost shut up. And is this a likely Supposition for Sincerity and good Nature ?

Does

*Ibid.*

Does Honour use to rise upon the Ruins of Conscience? And are People the best Friends where they have the least Reason to be so? But not only the Inclinations to Friendship must Languish upon this Scheme, but the very Powers of it are as it were destroy'd. By this Systeme, no Man can say his Soul is his own. He can't be assured the same Colours of Reason and Desire will last. Any little Accident from *without*, may metamorphose his Fancy, and push him upon a new Set of Thoughts. *Matter* and *Motion* are the most Humorsome Capricious Things in Nature; and withal, the most Arbitrary and uncontroll'd. And can Constancy proceed from Chance, Choice from Fate, and Vertue from necessity? In short, a Man at this rate, must be a Friend or an Enemy in spight of his Teeth, and just as long as the *Atoms* please, and no longer: Every Change in *Figure* and *Impulse*, must alter the Idea, and wear off the former Impression. So that by these Principles, Friendship will depend on the *Seasons*, and we must look in the *Weather Glass* for our Inclinations. But this 'tis to Refine upon Revelation, and grow wiser than Wisdom! The same Author in his Dedication of *Juvenal* and *Persius*, has these Words: My Lord, I am come to the last Petition of

Ded. p. 31.

F 3

Abraham

Abraham, *If there be ten Righteous Lines in this vast Preface, spare it for their sake; and also spare the next City, because it is but a little one.* Here the Poet stands for *Abraham*, and the Patron for God Almighty: And where lies the Wit of all this? In the Decency of the Comparison? I doubt not. And for the *next City* he would have spared, he is out in the Allusion. 'Tis no *Zoar*, but much rather *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*; Let them take care the Fire and Brimstone does not follow: And that those who are so bold with *Abraham's* Petition, are not forced to that of *Dives*. To beg Protection for a Lewd Book in *Scripture-Phrase*, is very extraordinary! 'Tis in effect to prostitute the Holy Rhetorick, and send the *Bible* to the *Brothel*! I can hardly imagine why these Tombs of Antiquity were raked in, and disturb'd! Unless it were to conjure up a departed Vice, and revive the Pagan Impurities; unless it were to raise the Stench of the Vault, and Poison the Living with the Dead. Indeed *Juvenal* has a very untoward way with him in some of his Satirs. His Pen has such a Libertine stroak, that 'tis a Question whether the Practice, or the Reproof, the Age, or the Author, were the more Licentious. He teaches those Vices he would correct

correct, and writes more like a Pimp, than a *Poet*. And truly I think there is but little of Lewdness lost in the *Translation*. The Sixth and Eleventh *Satirs* are Particularly remarkable. Such nauseous stuff is almost enough to debauch the *Alphabet*, and make the Language scandalous. One would almost be sorry for the Privilege of *Speech*, and the Invention of *Letters*, to see them thus wretchedly abused. And since the Business must be undertaken, why was not the Thought Blanched, the Expression made remote, and the ill Features cast into Shadows? I'm mistaken if we have not Lewdness enough of our own Growth, without Importing from our Neighbours. No This can't be. An Author must have Right done him, and be shown in his own Shape, and Complexion. Yes by all means! Vice must be disrobed, and People poison'd, and all for the sake of Justice! To do Right to such an Author is to burn him. I hope Modesty is much better than Resemblance. The Imitation of an ill Thing is the worse for being exact: And sometimes to report a Fault is to repeat it.

To return to his *Plays*. In *Love Triumphant*, Garcia makes *Veramond* this Compliment:

Love Tri-  
umph. p 3.

May Heaven and your brave Son, and a-  
bove all,  
Your own prevailing Genius guard your Age.

What is meant by his Genius, in this place, is not easy to Discover, only that 'tis something which is a better Guard than Heaven. But 'tis no Matter for the Sense, as long as the Profaneness is clear. In this *Act*, Colonel *Sancho* lets *Carlos* know the old Jew is dead, which he calls good news.

Carl. *What Jew?*

Id. p. 11.

Sanch. *Why the rich Jew my Father, he is gone to the Bosom, of Abraham his Father, and I his Christian Son am left sole Heir.* A very mannerly Story! But why does the Poet acquaint us with *Sancho's* Religion? The case is pretty plain: 'Tis to give a lustre to his Profaneness, and make him burlesque St. *Luke* with the better Grace.

Id. p. 11.

*Alphonso* complains to *Victoria* that *Nature dotes with Age*. His reason is, because Brother and Sister can't Marry as they did at first: 'Tis very well! We know what *Nature* means in the Language of Christianity, and especially under the Notion of a Law-giver. *Alphonso* goes on, and compares the Possession of Incestuous Love to Heaven. Yes, 'tis *Eternity in Little*.

p. 34.

It



It seems Lovers must be distracted, or there's no diversion. A Flight of Madness like a Faulcons *Lessening*, makes them the more gaz'd at! I am now coming to some of the Poet's Divinity. And here *Vengeance is said to be so sweet a Morsel,*

*That Heaven reserves it for it's proper Taste.* p. 32.

This belike is the meaning of those Texts, *that God is good and gracious, and slow to anger, and does not willingly afflict the Children of Men!* From expounding the Bible, he goes to the *Common-Prayer*. And as Carlos interprets the *Office of Matrimony*, **For Better for Worse, is for Virgin for Whore;** p. 62. And that the Reference might not be mistaken, the Poet is careful to put the Words in *Italick*, and great Letters. And by the way, He falls under the *Penalty* of the Statute for Depraving the *Common-Prayer*. 1st. Eliz. cap. 2.

*Sancho* upon reading a Letter which he did not like, cries, *Damn it, it must be all* p. 63. *Orthodox. Damn and Orthodox* clapt together, make a lively Rant, because it looks like Cursing the *Creed*. The most extraordinary Passage is behind; *Sancho* was unhappily Married: *Carlos* tells him, *For* p. 72. *your Comfort, Marriage they say is Holy. Sancho* replies: *Ay, and so is Martyrdom as they say, but both of them are good for just nothing,*

## The Profaneness

*Love for  
Love.* p. 49.

p. 26.

p. 27.

thing, but to make an end of a Man's Life. I shall make no Reflections upon This: There needs no Reading upon a Monster: 'Tis shown enough by its own Deformity. *Love for Love* has a Strain like this, and therefore I shall put them together: *Scandal* sollicit Mrs. *Fore-sight*: She threatens to tell her Husband. He replies, *He will die a Martyr rather than disclaim his Passion*. Here we have Adultery dignified with the style of Martyrdom: As if 'twas as Honourable to perish in Defence of Whoring, as to die for the Faith of Christianity. But these *Martyrs* will be a great while in burning, and therefore let no body strive to grace the Adventure, or encrease the Number. And now I am in this *Play*, the Reader shall have more. *Jeremy* who was bred at the University, calls the Natural Inclinations to Eating and Drinking, *Whoreson Appetites*. This is strange Language! The *Manicheans*, who made Creation the work of the Devil, could scarcely have been thus Coarse. But the *Poet* was *Jeremy's* Tutor, and so that Mystery is at an end. *Sr. Samson* carries on the Expostulation, rails at the Structure of Humane Bodies, and says, *Nature has been Provident only to Bears, and Spiders*; This is the Author's Paraphrase on the 139 *Psalm*; And thus he gives God thanks for the Advantage of

of his Being! The *Play* advances from one Wickedness to another, from the *Works* of God to the Abuse of his Word. *Fore-sight* confesses 'tis *Natural* for Men to mistake. Scandal replies, You say true, Man will err, meer Man will err----- but you are something more----- There have been wise Men; but they were such as you----- Men who consulted the Stars, and were observers of Omens----- Solomon was wise but how? ----- by his Judgment in *Astrology*. 'Tis very well! Solomon and *Fore-sight* had their Understandings qualified alike. And pray what was *Fore-sight*? Why an *Illiterate* Fellow. A pretender to *Dreams*, *Astrology*, *Palmestry*, &c. This is the Poet's account of *Solomon's* Supernatural Knowledge! Thus the wisest Prince is dwindled into a Gypsie! And the Glorious Miracle resolved into Dotage, and Figure-flinging! Scandal continues his Banter, and says, the wise Men of the East owed their Instruction to a Star; which is rightly observ'd by Gregory the Great in favour of *Astrology*. This was the Star which shone at our Saviour's Birth. Now who could imagine by the Levity of the occasion, that the Author thought it any better than an *Ignis Fatuus*, or *Sydrophel's* Kite in *Hudibras*? Sir Sampson and the fine *Angelica*, after some lewd Raillery continue the Allegory, and drive

P. 47.

Vid. Person. Dram.

## The Profaneness

drive it up into Profaneness. For this reason the Citation must be imperfect.

*Sr. Sampf. Sampson's a very good Name for--- your Sampsons were strong Dogs from the beginning.*

p. 80.

*Angel. Have a care--- If you remember the strongest Sampson of your Name, pull'd an old House over his Head at last. Here you have the Sacred History Burlesqu'd, and Sampson once more brought into the House of Dagon, to make sport for the Philistines! To draw towards an end of this Play. Tattle would have carried off Valentine's Mistress, This latter, expresses his Resentment in a most Divine manner!*

p. 91.

*Tattle, I thank you, you would have interpos'd between me and Heaven, but Providence has laid Purgatory in your way. Thus Heaven is debas'd into an Amour, and Providence brought in to direct the Paultry concerns of the Stage! Angelica concludes much in the same strain. Men are*

p. 92.

*generally Hypocrites and Infidels, they pretend to Worship, but have neither Zeal, nor Faith; How few like Valentine would persevere unto Martyrdom? &c. Here you have the Language of the Scriptures, and the most solemn Instances of Religion, prostituted to Courtship and Romance! Here you have a Mistress made God Almighty, Ador'd with Zeal and Faith, and*

and Worship'd up to Martyrdom! This if 'twere only for the Modesty, is strange stuff for a Lady to say of her self. And had it not been for the Profane Allusion, would have been cold enough in all Conscience.

The *Provok'd Wife* furnishes the Audience with a Drunken Atheistical Catch: 'Tis true this Song is afterwards said to be *Full of Sin and Impudence*. But why then was it made? This Confession is a miserable *Salvo*; and the Antidote is much weaker than the Poison: 'Tis just as if a Man should set a House in a Flame, and think to make amends by crying *Fire* in the Streets. In the last *Act*, *Rasor* makes his Discovery of the Plot against *Belinda* in *Scripture-Phrase*. I'll give it the *Reader* in the Author's Dialogue.

*Prov. Wife*  
p. 38.

*Belind.* I must know who put you upon all this *Mischief*. Id. p. 77.

*Rasor.* *Sathan and his Equipage. Woman tempted me, Lust weaken'd,—— And so the Devil overcame me: As fell Adam so fell I.*

*Belind.* Then pray, Mr. Adam, Will you make us acquainted with your Eve?

*Rasor* unmasks } This is the Woman  
Mademoiselle, and } that tempted me: But  
says, } this is the Serpent  
(meaning Lady Fanciful)  
that

## The Profaneness

that tempted the Woman; And if my Prayers might be heard, her punishment for so doing, should be like the Serpents of old, &c. This Rasor in what we hear of him before, is all Roguery, and Debauch: But now he enters in Sackloth, and talks like Tribulation in the Alchemist. His Character is chang'd to make him the more Profane; And his Habit, as well as Discourse, is a Jest upon Religion. I am forced to omit one Line of his Confession. The Design of it is to make the Bible deliver an obscene Thought: And because the Text would not bend into a Lewd Application, he alters the Words for this purpose, but passes it for Scripture still. This sort of Enertainment is frequent in the Relapse. Lord Foplington laughs at the Publick Solemnities of Religion, as if 'twas a ridiculous piece of Ignorance, to pretend to the Worship of a God. He Discourses with Berinthia and Amanda in this manner: *Why Faith Madam,-----Sunday is a vile Day, I must confess. A Man must have very little to do at Church that can give an account of the Sermon. And a little after: To Mind the Prayers or the Sermon, is to mind what one should not do. Lory tells young Fashion. I have been in a lamentable Fright ever since that Conscience had the Impudence to intrude into your Company.* His

Relapse,  
P. 32. 33.

His Master makes him this comfortable Answer. *Be at peace, it will come no more: — I have kick'd it down stairs.* A little before, he breaks out into this Rapture. *Now Conscience I defie thee!* By the way, p. 44, 45. we may observe, that this young *Fashion* is the Poet's Favourite. *Berinthia* and *Wor-* Vid. *Infra* thy, two Characters of Figure, determine the point thus, in defence of Pimping.

*Berinth.* Well, I would be glad to have no Bodies Sins to answer for but my own. But p. 51. where there is a necessity—

*Worth.* Right as you say, where there is a Necessity, a Christian is bound to help his Neighbour.

*Nurse*, after a great deal of profane Stuff, concludes her Expostulation in these words: *But his Worship (Young Fashion) over-flows with his Mercy and his Bounty; He is not only pleas'd to forgive us our Sins—but which is more than all, has prevail'd with me* p. 96, 97. *to become the Wife of thy Bosom:* This is very heavy, and ill dress'd; And an Atheist must be sharp set to relish it. The Vertuous *Amanda* makes no scruple to charge the Bible with untruths.

*—What Slippery stuff are Men compos'd of? Ibid.* Sure the Account of their Creation's false, And 'twas the Woman's Rib that they were form'd of.

Thus

## The Profaneness

Thus this Lady abuses her self, together with the Scripture, and shews her Sense, and her Religion, to be much of a Size.

*Berinthia*, after she has given in a Scheme for the debauching *Amanda*, is thus accosted by *Worthy*: *Thou Angel of Light, let me fall down and adore thee!* A most Seraphick Compliment to a Procuress! And 'tis possible some Angel or other, may thank him for't in due time.

I am quite tired with these wretched Sentences. The sight indeed is horrible, and I am almost unwilling to shew it. However they shall be Produced like Malefactors, not for Pomp, but Execution. Snakes and Vipers, must sometimes be look'd on, to destroy them. I can't forbear expressing my self with some warmth under these Provocations. What Christian can be unconcern'd at such intolerable Abuses? What can be a juster Reason for Indignation than Insolence and Atheism? Resentment can never be better shown, nor Aversion more seasonably exerted! Nature made the Ferment and Rising of the Blood, for such occasions as This. On what unhappy Times are we fallen! The Oracles of Truth, the Laws of Omnipotence, and the Fate of Eternity are Laught at and despis'd! That the Poets  
should



should be suffer'd to play upon the *Bible*,  
and Christianity be Hooted off the *Stage*!  
Christianity that from such feeble begin-  
nings made so stupendious a progress!  
That over-bore all the Oppositions of Pow-  
er, and Learning; and with Twelve poor  
Men, outstretch'd the *Roman* Empire.  
That this glorious Religion so reasonable  
in its Doctrine, so well attested by Mira-  
cles, by Martyrs, by all the Evidence that  
*Fact* is capable of, should become the Di-  
version of the Town, and the Scorn of Buf-  
foons! And where, and by whom is all this  
Out-rage committed? Why not by *Julian*,  
or *Porphirie*, not among Turks or Heathens,  
but in a Christian Country, in a Reform'd  
Church, and in the Face of Authority!  
Well! I perceive the Devil was a Saint in  
his *Oracles*, to what he is in his *Plays*. His  
Blasphemies are as much improv'd as his  
Stile, and one would think the Muse was  
*Legion*! I suppose the *Reader* may be sa-  
tisfied already: But if he desires farther  
proof, there's something more flamingly  
impious behind.

The Christian *Almeida* when *Sebastian*  
was in danger, Raves and Foams like one  
Possess'd,

But is there Heaven, for I begin to doubt? Don. Se.  
Now take you swing ye impious Sin unpunish'd, *bastian. p.*  
51.

G

Esse

## The Profaneness

*Eternal Providence seems over watch'd,  
And with a slumbring Nod assents to Murther.*

In the next Page, she bellows again much after the same manner. The *Double Dealer* to say the least of him, follows his Master in this Road, *Passibus aequis*. Sr. Paul Plyant one would think had done his part: But the ridiculing of *Providence* won't satisfie all People: And therefore the next attempt is somewhat bolder.

*Double  
Dealer. p.  
19.  
p. 17.*

Sr. Paul. *Hold your self contented my Lady Plyant,---- I find Passion coming upon me by Inspiration.* In *Love Triumphant*, Carlos is by the Constitution of the Play a Christian; and therefore must be construed in the Sense of his Religion. This Man blunders out this horrible Expression. *Nature has given me my Portion in Sense with a P---- to her, &c.* The Reader may see the Hellish Syllable at Length if he pleases. This Curse is borrow'd for *Young Fashion* in the *Relapse*. The *Double Dealer* is not yet exhausted. *Cynthia the Top Lady* grows *Thoughtful*. Upon the question, she relates her *Contemplation*. *Cynth. I am thinking (says she) that tho' Marriage makes Man and Wife one Flesh, it leaves them two Fools.* This Jest is made upon a Text in *Genesis*, and afterwards applied by our Saviour to the case of *Divorce*

*p. 44.*

*Double  
Dealer. p.  
18.*

*Gen. 2.  
Sr. Math.  
19.*

voice. Love for Love will give us a farther account of this Author's Proficiency in the Scriptures. Our Blessed Saviour affirms himself to be the Way, the Truth, and the Light, that he came to bear Witness to the Truth, and that his Word is Truth. These Expressions were remembred to good purpose. For *Valentina* in his pretended Madness tells *Buckram* the Lawyer; I am Truth,----- I am Truth.

Love, Sec.  
p. 59. 61.

Who's that, that's out of his way, I am Truth, and can set him right. Now a Poet that had not been smitten with the Pleasure of Blasphemy, would never have furnish'd Frensy with Inspiration; nor put our Saviour's Words in the Mouth of a Madman. *Lady Brute*, after some struggle between Conscience and Lewdness, declares in Favour of the later. She says, the part of a downright Wife is to Cuckold her Husband. And tho' this is against the strict Statute-Law of Religion, yet if there were a Court of Chancery in Heaven, she should be sure to cast him.

Provok'd  
Wife, p. 13.

This Brags is double Guilt. First, It supposes no Equity in Heaven. And Secondly, If there was, Adultery would not be punish'd! The Poet afterwards acquaints us by this Lady, that Blasphemy is no Woman's Sin. Why then does she fall into it? Why in the mid'st of Temper and

p. 65.

*Relapse, p.*  
19.

p. 26.

Reasoning? What makes him break in upon his own Rules? Is Blasphemy never unseasonable upon the Stage, and does it always bring its excuse along with it? The *Relapse* goes on in the same strain. When *Young Fashion* had a prospect of cheating his Elder Brother, he tells *Lory*, *Providence thou seest at last takes care of Men of Merit.* *Berinthia* who has engag'd to corrupt *Amanda* for *Worthy*; attacks her with this Speech, *Mr. Worthy used you like a Text, he took you all to pieces*, and it seems, was particular in her Commendation. Thus she runs on for several Lines, in a Lewd and Profane Allegory. In the Application, she speaks out the Design, and concludes with this Pious Exhortation! *Now consider what has been said, and Heaven give you Grace to put it in Practice*; that is to play the Whore. There are few of these last Quotations, but what are plain Blasphemy, and within the Law. They look reeking as it were from *Pandemonium*, and almost smell of Fire and Brimstone. This is an Eruption of Hell with a Witness! I almost wonder the smoak of it has not darken'd the Sun, and turn'd the Air to Plague and Poison! These are outrageous Provocations; enough to arm all Nature in Revenge; To exhaust the Judgments of Heaven, and

and sink the *Island* in the Sea! What a  
spite have these Men to the God that made  
them. How do they Rebell upon his  
Bounty, and attack him with his own  
Reason? These Giants in Wickedness,  
how would they ravage with a Stature  
Proportionable? They that can Swagger  
in Impotence, and Blaspheme upon a Mole-  
Hill, what would they do if they had  
Strength to their Good-Will? And what  
can be the Ground of this Confidence, and  
the Reason of such horrid Presumption?  
Why the *Scripture* will best satisfy the ques-  
tion. *Because sentence against an Evil Work*  
*is not executed speedily, therefore the Heart of*  
*the Sons of Men, is fully set in them to do Evil.*

*Eccles. 8.*

*11.*

Clemency is weakness with some Peo-  
ple; *And the Goodness of God which should*  
*lead them to Repentance, does but harden*  
*them the more.* They conclude he wants  
Power to punish, because he has Patience  
to forbear. Because there is a Space be-  
tween Blasphemy and Vengeance; and  
they don't perish in the Act of Defiance;  
Because they are not blasted with Light-  
ning, transfixt with Thunder, and Guard-  
ed off with Devils, they think there's no  
such matter as a day of Reckoning. *But Gal. 6.*  
*Let no Man be deceiv'd, God is not mock'd;*  
*not without danger they may be assured.*  
*Let them retreat in time, before the Floods*

## The Profaneness

run over them: Before they come to that place, where Madness will have no Mock, nor Blasphemy any Diversion.

And here it may not be amiss to look a little into the Behaviour of the *Heathens*. Now 'tis no wonder to find them run riot upon this Subject. The Characters of their Gods were not unblemish'd. Their Prospect of the other World, was but Dim neither were they under the Terrors of *Revelation*. However, they are few of them so bad as the *Moderns*.

*Eunuch.*

*Heauton.*

*A. 5. 1.*

*Adelp. A.*

*5. 7.*

*Terence* does not run often upon this Rock. 'Tis true, *Charea* falls into an ill Rapture after his Success. *Chremes* bids his Wife not tire the Gods with Thanks. And *Æschinus* is quite sick of the Religious part of the Wedding. These Instances excepting his Swearing, are the most, (and I think near all the) exceptionable Passages of this *Author*.

*Plautus* is much more bold. But then his sallies are generally made by *Slave* and *Panders*.

This makes the Example less dangerous, and is some sort of extenuation. I grant this imperfect excuse won't serve him always. There are some Instances where his *Persons* of better Figure are guilty of lewd Defences, Profane Flights and Sawcy Expostulation. But the *Re-*

*Lyconides.*

*Aulular.*

*A. 2. 4. Pa-*

*lastra Rud.*

*A. 1. 3.*

*Dinarchus.*

*Trucul.*

*A. 2. 4.*

*ma*

man Deities were Beings of ill Fame, 'tis the less wonder therefore if the Poets were familiar with them. However, *Plautus* has something good in him, and enough to condemn the Practice. *Plautus* would gladly have had the Gods change the method of Things, in some Particulars. He would have had frank good Humour'd People long liv'd, and close-fisted Knaves die Young. To this *Periplectimenus* Gravely answers, That 'tis great Ignorance, and Misbehaviour to Censure the Conduct of the Gods, or speak dishonourably of them. In his *Pseudolus* the Procurer *Ballio* talks Profanely. Upon which *Pseudolus* makes this Reflection. This Fellow makes nothing of Religion, how can we trust him in other matters? For the Gods whom all People have the greatest reason to fear, are most slighted by him. Mil. Glor.

The Greek Tragedians are more staunch, and write nearer the Scheme of Natural Religion. 'Tis true, they have some bold Expressions: But then they generally reprove the Liberty, and punish the Men. *Prometheus* in *Aeschylus* blusters with a great deal of Noise and Stubbornness. He is not for changing Conditions with Mercury: And chuses rather to be miserable, than to submit even to Jupiter himself. The *Chorus* rebuke him for his Pride, and threaten him with greater Punishment. Pseud. 77  
A. 1. 3.  
Prom.  
vinc. 57.

## The Profaneness

And the *Poet* to make all sure, brings him to Execution before the end of the *Play*. He discharges Thunder and Lightning at his Head; shakes his Rock with an Earthquake, turns the Air into Whirl-wind, and draws up all the Terrours of Nature to make him an Example. In his *Expedition against Thebes*, *Eteocles* expects *Capaneus* would be destroyed for his Blasphemies; Which happen'd accordingly. On the other hand; *Amphiarus* being a person of Virtue, and Piety, they are afraid least he should succeed. For a Religious Enemy is almost invincible. *Darius's* Ghost lays *Xerxes's* ruin upon the excels of his Ambition. 'Twas, because he made a Bridge over the *Hellepont*, used *Neptune* contumeliously, and thought himself Superiour to Heaven. This Ghost tells the *Chorus*, that the Persian Army miscarried for the out-rages they did to Religion, for breaking down the Altars, and plundering the Gods.

*Ajax's* Distraction is represented as judicial in *Sophocles*. 'Twas inflicted for his *Pride* and *Atheism*. 'When his Father bid him be brave but Religious; withall, he haughtily replyed, that 'twas for Cowards to beg the Assistance of the Gods; as for his part, he hoped to Conquer without them. And when *Minerva* encouraged him to charge the Enemy.

'He

p. 92.

p. 101.

Hes. 161.

164.

Ajax. Flaggell.



Τὸν ἀνίσχυον δαυδὲν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐξουσίας,

He made her this Lewd and insufferable Answer. Pray withdraw, and give your Countenance elsewhere, I want no Goddeses to help me do my Business, This Insolence made *Minerva* hate him; and was the cause of his Madness and self Murther. To proceed. The *Chorus* condemns the Liberty of *Jocasta*, who obliquely charged a Practice upon the *Ora-  
cle*: Tho' after all, she did not tax *Apollo*, but his Ministers. Oedip. Ty-  
ran. p. 187.

The same *Chorus* recommends Piety and Relyance upon the Gods, and threatens Pride and Irreligion with Destruction. In *Antigone*, *Tiresias* advises *Creon* to wave p. 188. the Rigour of his *Edict*, And not let the Body of *Polynices* lie unburied, and expos'd. He tells him the Altars were already polluted with Humane Flesh. This had made the Language of the Birds un- Antig.  
p. 256. intelligible, and confounded the marks of *Augury*. *Creon* replies in a rage, and says, he would not consent to the Burial of *Polynices*: No, tho' 'twere to prevent the Eagle's throwing part of the Carcass in *Jove's Chair of State*. This was a bold Flight; but 'tis not long before he pays for't. Soon after, his Son, and Queen, kill them-

## The Profaneness

themselves. And in the close, the Poet, who speaks in the *Chorus*, explains the Misfortune, and points upon the Cause, and affirms, that *Creon* was punish'd for his Haughtiness and Impiery. To go on to his *Trachinia*. *Hercules* in all the extremity of his Torture does not fall foul upon Religion. 'Tis true, He shows as much Impatience as 'tis possible. His Person, his Pain, and the Occasion of it, were very extraordinary. These circumstances make it somewhat natural for him to complain above the common rate. The Greatness of his Spirit, the Feavour of his Blood, and the Rage of his Passion, could hardly fail of putting Force, and Vehemence into his Expressions. Tho' to deal clearly, he seems better furnished with Rhetorick, than true Fortitude. But after all, his Disorders are not altogether ungovern'd: He is uneasy, but not impious, and profane.

*Trach.*  
p. 368.

I grant *Hercules Oetens* in *Seneca*, swaggers at a strange Rhodomontading rate. But the Conduct of this Author is very indifferent. He makes a meer *Salamander* of his *Hero*, and lets him declaim with too much of Length, Curiosity and Affectation, for one in his Condition: He harangues it with great plenty of Points, and Sentences in the Fire, and lies frying, and  
Phi-

Philosophizing for near a hundred Lines together. In fine, this Play is so injudiciously manag'd, that *Heinsius* is confident 'twas written by neither of the *Seneca's*, but by some later Author of a lower Class. To return to *Sophocles's Trachinia*. *Hyllus* reproaches the Gods with Neglect, *Trach. p.* because they gave *Hercules* no Assistance, 375. and glances upon *Jupiter* himself. This sally is not so thoroughly corrected as formerly. 'Tis true, the *Chorus*, make some little satisfaction immediately after. They resolve all surprizes of Misfortune, all Resolutions of States or Families, into the Will and Permission of *Jupiter*. This by implication, they make an Argument for acquiescence. Besides, the Poet had laid in a sort of Caution against Misconstruction before. For the *Messenger* tells *Dejaneira*, that we ought not to Murmur at *Trach. p.* the Conduct of *Jupiter*. 340.

— Τῷ λόγῳ δ' ἔχει φθόνον  
Γόναι προσεῖναι ζῆς ὅτι παλαιὸν φανῇ.

This for a Heathen is something, tho' not enough. *Cleomenes's* Rant seems an imitation of *Hyllus*, only 'tis bolder, and has nothing of the rashness of Youth to excuse it. Besides, *Sophocles* throws in *Cleom. p.* somewhat by way of Preservative. Where- 54.  
as

## The Profaneness

as in *Cleomenes*, the Boy *Cleonidas* has the better on the wrong side, and seems to carry the cause of Atheism against his Father. This Scene of a *Famine* Mr. *Dryden* calls a Beauty; and yet methinks *Cleora* is not very Charming! Her part is to tell you the Child suck'd to no purpose.

p. 34. *It pull'd, and pull'd but now, but nothing came;  
At last it drew so hard that the Blood follow'd.  
And that Red Milk I found upon its Lips,  
Which made me swoon for Fear.*

There's a Description of Sucking for you! And truly one would think the Muse on't were scarcely wean'd. This Lady's Fancy is just *Slip-Stocking-high*; and she seems to want Sense, more than her Breakfast. If this Passage would not shine, the Poet should have let it alone. 'Tis *Horace's* advice.

*De Arte  
Poet.*

————— *Et quæ  
Desperes tractate nitescere posse relinquo.*

The greatest part of the Life of this Scene is spent in Impious Rants, and Atheistical Disputes. To do the Author right, his *Characters* never want Spirits for such Service, either Full or Fasting. Some People love to say the worst Things in the best

best manner ; to perfume their Poisons, and give an Air to Deformity.

There is one ill Sentence in *Sophocles* behind. *Philoctetes* calls the Gods *Kanai*, and Libels their Administration. This Officer we must understand was left upon a Solitary Island, ill used by his Friends, and harrass'd with Poverty and Ulcers, for Ten Years together, These, under the Ignorance of Paganism, were trying Circumstances, and take off somewhat of the Malignity of the Complaint. Afterwards he seems to repent, and declares his Assurance that the Gods will do Justice, *p. 419.* and prays frequently to them. The Conclusion of this Play is remarkably Moral. Here *Hercules* appears in *Machine*; acquaints *Philoctetes* with his own Glorious Condition: That his Happiness was the Reward of Vertue, and the Purchase of Merit. He charges him to pay a due regard to Religion; for Piety would recommend him to *Jupiter* more than any other Qualification. It went into the other World with People, and they found their Account in't both Living and Dead. *p. 431.*

Upon the whole; the *Plays* of *Aeschylus* and *Sophocles* are formed upon Models of Vertue: they join Innocence with Pleasure, and design the Improvement of the Audience.

In

## The Profaneness

AÆ. 2.

P. 295.

Agam.  
Act. 3.

In *Euripides's Bacchæ*, *Pentheus* is pull'd in pieces for using *Bacchus* with Disrespect. And the *Chorus* observes that God never fails to punish Impiety, and Contempt of Religion. *Polyphemus* blusters Atheistically, and pretends to be as great as *Jupiter*: But then his Eye is burnt out in the fifth Act. And the *Chorus* in *Hercleida* affirm it next to Madness not to Worship the Gods. I grant he has some profane Passages stand uncorrected, and what wonder is it to see a *Pagan* Miscarry? *Seneca*, as he was inferior in Judgment to the *Greeks*, so he is more frequent, and uncautious, in his Flights of Extravagance. His Hero's and Heroines, are excessively bold with the Superior Beings. They rave to Distraction, and he does not often call them to an account for't. 'Tis true, *Ajax Oileus* is made an Example for Blaspheming in a Storm, He is first struck with Thunder, and then carried to the Bottom: The Modern Poets proceed upon the Liberties of *Seneca*. Their Madmen are very seldom reckon'd with. They are Profane without Censure, and despise the *Living God* with success. Nay, in some respect they exceed even *Seneca* himself. He flies out only under Impatience; and never falls into these Fits without Torture, and hard Usage. But the  
English

*English Stage* are unprovok'd in their Irreligion, and Blaspheme for their Pleasure. But supposing the *Theatres* of *Rome*, and *Athens*, as bad as possible, what Defence is all this? Can we argue from *Heathenism* to *Christianity*? How can the *Practice* be the same, where the *Rule* is so very different? Have we not a clearer Light to direct us, and greater Punishments to make us afraid. Is there no Distinction between Truth and Fiction, between Majesty and a Pageant? Must God be treated like an Idol, and the *Scriptures* banter'd like *Homer's Elysium*, and *Hesiod's Theogonia*? Are these the Returns we make him for his Supernatural Assistance? For the more perfect Discovery of himself, the stooping of his Greatness, and the Wonders of his Love. Can't we refuse the Happiness without affronting the Offer? Must we add Contempt to Disobedience, and Outrage to Ingratitude? Is there no Diversion without Insulting the God that made us, the Goodness that would save us, and the Power that can damn us? Let us not flatter our selves, *Words* won't go for nothing. Profaneness is a most provoking Contempt, and a Crime of the deepest dye. To break through the Laws of a Kingdom is bad enough; but to make *Ballads* upon the  
Statute-

## The Profaneness

*Statute-Book*, and a Jest of Authority, is much worse. Atheists may fancy what they please, but God will *Arise and Maintain his own Cause*, and Vindicate his Honour in due time.

To conclude. Profaneness, tho' never so well corrected, is not to be endured. It ought to be Banish'd without *Proviso*, or Limitation. No pretence of *Character* or Punishment, can excuse it; or any *Stage-Discipline* make it tolerable. 'Tis grating to *Christian Ears*, dishonourable to the Majesty of God, and dangerous in the Example. And in a Word, It tends to no point, unless it be to wear off the horror of the Practice, to weaken the force of Conscience, and to teach the Language of the Damn'd.

CHAP



## C H A P. III.

*The Clergy abused by the Stage.*

**T**HE Satir of the Stage upon the Clergy is extremely Particular: In other Cases, they level at a single Mark, and confine themselves to Persons. But here their Bofoonry takes an unusual Compass: They shoot Chain'd-shot, and strike at Universals. They play upon the Character, and endeavour to expose not only the Men, but the Business. 'Tis true, the Clergy are no small Rub in the Poet's way. 'Tis by their Ministrations that Religion is perpetuated, the other World refresh'd, and the Interest of Vertue kept up. Vice will never have an unlimited Range, nor Conscience be totally subdued, as long as People are so easy as to be Priest-ridden! As long as these Men are look'd on as the Messengers of Heaven, and the Supports of Government, and enjoy their old Pretensions in Credit and Authority; as long as this Grievance continues, the Stage must decline of Course, and Atheism give Ground, and Lewdness lie under Censure;

H

and

## The Clergy Abused

and Discouragement. Therefore that Liberty may not be embarrass'd, nor Principles make Head against Pleasure, the Clergy must be attack'd, and rendred Ridiculous.

To represent a Person fairly and without disservice to his Reputation, two Things are to be observ'd. First, He must not be ill used by others: Nor, Secondly, be made to play the Fool himself. This latter way of Abuse is rather the worst, because here a Man is a sort of *Felo de se*; and appears ridiculous by his own fault. The Contradiction of both these Methods is practis'd by the Stage. To make sure work on't, they leave no stone unturn'd, the whole *Common-place* of Rudeness is run through. They strain their Invention and their Malice: And overlook nothing in ill Nature, or ill Manners to gain their point.

18, 16, 20.

To give some Instances of their Civility: In the *Spanish Fryer*, *Dominick* is made a Pimp for *Lorenzo*; He is call'd a *parcel of Holy Guts and Garbage*, and said to have *room in his Belly for his Church-steeple*.

*Dominick* has a great many of these Compliments bestow'd upon him. And to make the Railing more effectual, you have a general stroke or two upon the Profession. Would you know what are the

*Infallible*

*Infallible Church-Remedies.* Why 'tis to Lie Impudently, and Swear Devoutly. A. p. 37. little before this, *Dominick* counterfeits himself sick, retires, and leaves *Lorenzo* and *Elvira* together; And then the Remark upon the Intrigue follows 'You see, p. 23. 'Madam (says *Lorenzo*) 'tis Interest governs all the World. He Preaches against Sin, why? Because he gets by't: He holds his Tongue, why? Because so much more is bidden for his Silence. 'Tis but giving a Man his Price, and Principles of Church are bought off as easily as they are in State: No Man will be a Rogue for nothing; but Compensation must be made, so much Gold for so much Honesty; and then a Church-man will break the Rules of Chers. For the Black Bishop, will skip into the White, and the White into the Black, without Considering whether the remove be Lawful.

At last *Dominick* is discover'd to the Company, makes a dishonorable Exit, and is push'd off the Stage by the Rabble. This is great Justice! The Poet takes care to make him first a Knave, and then an Example: But his hand is not even. For Lewd *Lorenzo* comes off with flying Colours. 'Tis not the Fault which is corrected, but

## The Clergy Abused

the Priest. The Author's Discipline is seldom without a Bias. He commonly gives the *Laity* the Pleasure of an ill Action, and the *Clergy* the Punishment.

To proceed. *Horner* in his general Remarks upon Men, delivers it as a sort of Maxim, *that your Church-man is the greatest Atheist*. In this Play *Harcourt* puts on the Habit of a Divine. *Alishea* does not think him what he appears; but *Sparkish* who could not see so far, endeavours to divert her Suspicion. *I tell you (says he) this is Ned Harcourt of Cambridge, you see he has a sneaking College-look*. Afterwards his Character is sufficiently abused by *Sparkish* and *Lucy*; but not so much, as by Himself. He tells you in an *Aside*. *he must suit his Style to his Coat*. Upon this wise Recollection, He talks like a fervile, impertinent Fop.

Country  
Wife p. 6.

p. 35.

*Ibid.*

In the *Orphan*, The Young Soldier *Chamont* calls the Chaplain *Sir Gravity*, and treats him with the Language of *Thee* and *Thou*. The Chaplain instead of returning the Contempt; flatters *Chamont* in his Folly, and pays a Respect to his Pride. The Cavalier encourag'd, I suppose, by this Sneaking, proceeds to all the Excellences of Rudeness.

— is there not one

p. 25.

Of all thy Tribe that's Honest in your School?  
The Pride of your Superiours makes ye Slaves:  
Ye all live Loathsome, Sneaking, Servile lives:  
Not free enough to practise generous Truth,  
Tho' ye pretend to teach it to the World.

After a little Pause for Breath, the Railing improves.

If thou wouldst have me not condemn thy Office,  
And Character, think all thy Brethren Knaves,  
Thy Trade a Cheat, and thou its worst Pro- p. 26.  
fessor,  
Inform me; for I tell thee, Priest I'll know.

The Bottom of the Page is down-right  
Porter's Rhetorick.

Art thou then

So far concern'd in't? —

Curse on that formal steady Villain's Face!  
Just so do all Bawds look; Nay Bawds, they say,  
Can Pray upon Occasion; talk of Heaven; 1bid.  
Turn up their gogling Eye-balls, rail at Vice;  
Dissemble, Lye, and Preach like any Priest;  
Art thou a Bawd?

The Old Batchelour has a Throw at the  
Dissenting Ministers. The Pimp-Setter pro-

## The Clergy Abused

vides their Habit for *Bellmour* to Debauch *Letitia*. The Dialogue runs thus.

*Bell.* And hast thou provided Necessaries?

*Setter All,* all Sir, the large sanctified Hat, and the little precise Band, with a swinging long Spiritual Cloak, to cover Carnal Knowledge. *very,* --- not forgetting the black Patch which  
*Old Batch.* *very,* --- not forgetting the black Patch which  
*p. 19. 20.* *Tribulation* Spintext wears as 'I'm inform'd upon one eye, as a penal Mourning for the  
 --- Offences of his Touth, &c.

*Barnaby* calls another of that Character *Mr. Prig*, and *Fondlewife* carries on the Humour lewdly in *Play-house Cant*; And to hook the Church of England into the Abuse, he tacks a *Chaplain* to the End of the Description.

*Lucy* gives another Proof of the Poet's good Will, but all little Scurrilities are not worth repeating.

In the *Double Dealer*, the discourse between *Maskwell* and *Saygrace* is very notable. *Maskwell* had a design to cheat *Melissont* of his Mistress, and engages the Chaplain in the Intrigue: There must be a *Levite* in the case; For without one of them have a finger in't, no Plot publick, or private, can expect to prosper.

To go on in the order of the Play.

*Maskwell* calls out at *Saygrace's* door, *Mr. Saygrace, Mr. Saygrace.*

The other answers, *Sweet Sir, I will be*  
*Pen*

pen the last Line of an Acrostick, and be  
wish you in the twinkling of an Ejaculation,  
in the Pronouncing of an Amen, &c.

Mask. Nay good Mr. Saygrace, do not  
prolong the time, &c.

Saygrace. You shall prevail, I would break  
off in the middle of a Sermon, to do you  
Pleasure.

Mask. You could not do me a greater——  
except——the business in hand——have  
you provided a Habit for Mellifont?

Saygr. I have, &c.

Mask. Have you stitch'd the Gown-sleeve,  
that he may be puzzled and waste time in put-  
ting it on?

Saygr. I have; the Gown will not be in-  
duced without Perplexity. There is a little  
more profane, and abusive stuff behind,  
but let that pass.

The Author of *Don Sebastian* strikes  
at the *Bishops* through the sides of the  
*Mufti*, and borrows the Name of the *Turk*  
to make the *Christian* ridiculous. He  
knows the transition from one Religion  
to the other is Natural, the Application ea-  
sily, and the Audience but too well prepar'd.  
And should they be at a loss, he has else-  
where given them a *Key* to understand  
him.

For *Priests* of all Religions are the same.

*Abfal. and  
Ach.*

H 4

However

## The Clergy Abused

However that the Sense may be perfectly intelligible, he makes the Inveective General, changes the Language, and rails in the Style of Christendom.

*Benducar* speaks,

— *Churchmen tho' they itch to govern all,  
Are silly, woful, awkward Politicians,  
They make lame Mischief tho' they mean well,*

So much the better, for 'tis a sign they are not beaten to the Trade. The next Lines are an Illustration taken from a *Taylor*.

*Their Int'rest is not finely drawn and hid,  
But seams are coarsly bungled up and seen.*

This *Benducar* was a rare Spokesman for a first *Minister*; And would have fitted *John of Leyden* most exactly!

In the Fourth *Act*, the *Musti* is *Depos'd* and *Captain Tom* reads him a shrewd Lecture at parting. But let that pass.

To go on, *Mustapha* threatens his great Patriarch to put to him the Rack. Now you shall hear what an answer of Fortitude and Discretion is made for the *Musti*.

*Musti*. I hope you will not be so barbarous to torture me. We may preach Suffering to others, but alas holy Flesh is too well pamper'd



to endure *Martyrdom*. By the way, if *p. 96.*  
 flinching from *Suffering* be a proof of *Holy*  
*Flesh*, the *Poet* is much a Saint in his Con-  
 stitution, witness his *Dedication* of King  
*Arthur*.

In *Cleomenes*, *Cassandra* rails against  
 Religion at the Altar, and in the midst of  
 a Publick Solemnity.

*Accurs'd be thou, Grass-eating fodder'd God! p. 32.*  
*Accurs'd thy Temple! More accurs'd thy*  
*Priests!*

She goes on in a mighty Huff, and char-  
 ges the Gods and Priesthood with Confe-  
 deracy, and Imposture. This Rant is  
 very unlikely at *Alexandria*. No People  
 are more bigotted in their Superstition  
 than the *Egyptians*; Nor any more re-  
 senting of such an Affront. This Satir  
 then must be strangely out of Fashion, and  
 Probability. No matter for that; it may  
 work by way of Inference, and be ser-  
 viceable at Home. And 'tis a handsom  
 Complement to Libertines and Atheists.

We have much such another swaggering  
 against Priests in *Oedipus*.

*Why seek I Truth from thee?*  
*The smiles of Courtiers and the Harlots tears,*  
*The Tradesmens Oaths, and Mourning of an*  
*Heir, Are*

## The Clergy Abused

*Are Truths to what Priests tell.*

Oedip. p.  
38.

*O why has Priesthood privilege to Lye,  
And yet to be believ'd!*

And since they are thus Lively, I have one word or two to say to the *Play*.

When *Aegeon* brought the News of King *Polybus's* Death, *Oedipus* was wonderfully surpriz'd at the Relation.

p. 48.

*O all ye Powers is't possible? What, Dead!*

And why not? Was the Man invulnerable or immortal? Nothing of that: He was only Fourscore and Ten Years old that was his main security. And if you will believe the Poet, he

Ibid.

*Fell like Autumn-Fruit that mellow'd long,  
Ev'n wondred at because dropt no sooner.*

And which is more, *Oedipus* must be acquainted with his Age, having spent the greatest part of his Time with him at *Corinth*. So that in short, the pith of the Story lies in this Circumstance. A Prince of Ninety Years was dead, and one who was wondred at for dying no sooner. And now why so much Exclamation upon this occasion? Why must all the *Powers* in Being, be summon'd in to make the News  
Cre-

Credible? This *Posse of Interjections* would have been more seasonably raised, if the Man had been alive; for that by the Poet's Confession had been much the stranger Thing. However *Oedipus* is almost out of his Wits about the Matter, and is urgent for an account of Particulars.

*That so the Tempest of my joys may rise  
By just degrees, and hit at last the Stars.*

*Ibid.*

This is an empty ill proportion'd Rant, and without warrant in Nature or Antiquity. *Sophocles* does not represent *Oedipus* in such Raptures of extravagant surprize. In the next page, there's another Flight about *Polybus* his Death somewhat like this. It begins with a *Noverint Universi*. You would think *Oedipus* was going to make a Bond.

*Know, be it known to the limits of the World;*

This is scarce Sense, be it known.

*Yet farther, let it pass yon dazling roof,  
The Mansion of the Gods, and strike them deaf  
With Everlasting peals of Thundring joy.*

This Fustian puts me in mind of a Couplet of Taylor's the Water-Poet, which for  
the

## The Clergy Abused

the Beauty of the Thought are not very unlike.

*What if a Humble-Bee should chance to strike,  
With the But-End of an Antartick Pole.*

I grant Mr. Dryden clears himself of this *Act* in his *Vindication* of the Duke of Guise. But then why did he let these crude Fancies pass uncorrected in his Friend? Such fluttering ungovern'd Transports, are fitter for a Boy's *Declamation* than a *Tragedy*. But I shall trouble myself no farther with this *Play*. To return therefore to the Argument in hand. In the *Provok'd Wife* Sir John Brute puts on the Habit of a Clergyman; counterfeits himself Drunk; quarrels with the *Constable*; and is knock'd down and seiz'd. He rails, swears, curses, is lewd and profane, to all the Heights of Madness and Debauchery: The *Officers* and *Justice* break jests upon him, and make him a sort of Representative of this *Order*.

*Provok'd  
Wife.  
P. 45. 46,  
51, 52.*

This is rare Protestant Diversion, and very much for the Credit of the *Reformation*! The Church of *England*, I mean the Men of Her, is the only Communion in the World, that will endure such Insolences as these: The *Relapse* is, if possible, more singularly abusive. *But* the Chaplain  
wishes

Wishes the Married couple joy, in Language horribly Smutty and Profane. To transcribe it would blot the Paper too much. In the next Page, *Young Fashion* desires *Bull* to make haste to Sir *Tun-belly*. He answers very decently, *I fly my good Lord*. At the end of this *Act*, *Bull* speaks to the Case of *Bigamy*, and determines it thus. *I do confess to take two, Husbands for the Satisfaction of -- is to commit the Sin of Exorbitancy, but to do it for the peace of the Spirit, is no more than to be Drunk by way of Physick; besides, to prevent a Parent's wrath is to avoid the Sin of Disobedience, for when the Parent is Angry, the Child is froward: The Conclusion is insolently Profane, and let it lie: The spirit of this thought is borrow'd from Ben Johnson's Bartbolemew Fair; only the Profaneness is mightily improved, and the Abuse thrown off the Meeting-House, upon the Church. The Wit of the Parents being angry, and the Child froward, is all his own. Bull has more of this heavy stuff upon his Hands. He tells Young Fashion, Your Worship's goodness is unspeakable, yet there is one thing seems a point of Conscience; And Conscience is a tender Babe, &c.*

These Poets I observe when they grow lazy, and are inclined to Nonsense, they commonly get a Clergy-man to speak it.

Thus

Relapse.  
p. 74.

p. 75.

p. 86.

p. 97.

## The Clergy Abused

89.

Thus they pass their own Dulness for Humour, and gratifie their Ease, and their Malice at once. *Coupler* instructs *Young Fashion* which way *Bull* was to be managed. He tells him as *Chaplains* go now, *he must be brib'd high, He wants Money, Preferment, Wine, and a Whore. Let this be procured for him, and I'll warrant thee he speaks Truth like an Oracle.*

p. 94.

p. 95. 97.  
105.

A few lines forward, the Rudeness is still more gross, and dash'd with Smut, the common *Play-house* Ingredient. 'Tis not long before *Coupler* falls into his old Civilities. He tells *Young Fashion*, *Last Night the Devil run away with the Parson of Fatgoose Living.* Afterwards *Bull* is plentifully rail'd on in downright *Bilings-gate*: made to appear Silly, Servile, and Profane; and treated both in Posture and Language, with the utmost Contempt.

I could cite more *Plays* to this purpose; But these are sufficient to shew the Temper of the *Stage*,

Thus we see how hearty these People are in their Ill Will! How they attack Religion under every Form, and pursue the Priesthood through all the Subdivisions of Opinion. Neither *Jews* nor *Heathens*, *Turks* nor *Christians*, *Rome* nor *Geneva*, *Church* nor *Conventicle*, can escape

scape them. They are afraid, lest Vertue should have any Quarters undisturbed, Conscience any Corner to retire to, or God be Worshipped in any Place. 'Tis true, their Force seldom carries up to their Malice: They are too eager in the Combat to be happy in the Execution. The Abuse is often both gross and clumsy, and the Wit as wretched as the Manners. Nay, Talking won't always satisfy them: They must ridicule the *Habit*, as well as the *Function*, of the Clergy. 'Tis not enough for them to play the Fool, unless they do it in *Pontificalibus*. The Farce must be play'd in a Religious Figure, and under the Distinctions of their Office! Thus the Abuse strikes strong upon the Sense; The contempt is better spread, and the little *Idea* is apt to return upon the same Appearance.

And now, does this Rudeness go upon any Authorities? Was the Priesthood always thought thus insignificant, and do the Ancient Poets pass it in this manner? This point shall be tried, I shall run through the most considerable Authors that the Reader may see how *they* treat the Argument. *Homer* stands highest upon the Roll, and is the first Poet both in Time, and Quality; I shall therefore begin with him. 'Tis true he wrote no  
Plays;

## The Clergy Abused

*Plays*; but for Decency, Practice, and general Opinion, his Judgment may well be taken. Let us see then how the *Priests* are treated in his *Poem*, and what sort of Rank they hold.

*Chryses*, *Apollo's* Priest, appears at a Council of War with his Crown and gilt Scepter. He offers a valuable Ransom for his Daughter, and presses his Relation to *Apollo*. All the Army excepting *Agamemnon* are willing to consider his Character, and comply with his Proposals. But this General refuses to part with the Lady, and sends away her Father with disrespect. *Apollo* thought himself affronted with this Usage, and Revenges the Indignity in a Plague.

Hom. Il.

a. p. 3.

Edin.

Ed. Scre.

vel.

Ὀυρανὸν καὶ Χρυσέω ἱππῶν ἀντιπρὸς  
'Αργείδης.

Il. β. p. 91.

Ibid. p. 92.

Il. α. p.

154. 155.

*Adrastus* and *Amphius* the Sons of *Merops* a Prophet, commanded a considerable extent of Country in *Troas*, and brought a Body of Men to King *Priam's* Assistance. And *Ennomus* the Augur commanded the Troops of *Mysia* for the Besieged.

*Phlegus* and *Idæus* were the Sons of *Dares* the Priest of *Vulcan*. They appear in an Equipage of Quality, and charge *Diomedes* the third Hero in the *Grecian* Army



Army. *Idæus* after the Misfortune of the Combat, is brought off by *Vulcan*. *Dolopion* was Priest to *Scamander*, and regarded like the God he belong'd to,

ib. p. 154.  
155.

*Idæus* & *Dolopion*.

ib. p. 158.

*Ulysses* in his return from *Troy*, took *Ismarus* by Storm, and makes Prize of the whole Town, excepting *Maron* and his Family. This *Maron* was *Apollo's* Priest, and preserv'd out of respect to his Function: He presents *Ulysses* nobly in Gold, Plate, and Wine; And this *Hero* makes an honourable mention of him, both as to his Quality, and way of Living.

*Odys.* 1. p.  
14. 71. 81.

These are all the Priests I find mentioned in *Homer*; And we see how fairly the Poet treats them, and what sort of Figure they made in the World.

To the Testimony of *Homer*, I shall joyn that of *Virgil*, who tho' he follows at a great distance of Time, was an Author of the first Rank, and wrote the same kind of Poetry with the other. Now *Virgil*, tho' he is very extraordinary in his Genius, in the Compass of his Learning, in the Musick and Majesty of his Style; yet the exactness of his Judgment seems to be his peculiar, and most distinguishing Talent. He had the truest

## The Clergy Abused

Relish imaginable, and always described Things according to *Nature, Custom, and Decency*. He wrote with the greatest Command of *Temper*, and *Superiority* of good *Sense*. He is never lost in Smoak and Rapture, nor overborn with Poetick Fury; but keeps his Fancy warm and his Reason cool at the same time. Now this great Master of Propriety never mentions any *Priests* without some *Marks of Advantage*. To give some Instances as they lie in Order.

when the *Trojans* were consulting what was to be done with the *Wooden-Horse*, and some were for lodging it within the Walls: *Laocoon* appears against this Opinion, at the head of a numerous Party; harangues with a great deal of *Sense*, and *Resolution*; and examines the *Machine* with his Lance. In fine, He advised so well, and went so far in the Discovery of the *Stratagem*; that if the *Trojans* had not been ungovernable, and as it were stupified by Fate and Folly, he had saved the Town.

*Aeneid 2.*

*Trojaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres.*

This *Laocoon* was *Neptune's Priest*, and either Son to *Priam*, or Brother to *Archifex*

*chises*, who was of the Royal Family, *Ruam in*  
The next we meet with, is *Pantheus A-* *Loc.*  
*pollo's* Priest. He is called *Pantheus Oitya-*  
*des*, which is an Argument his Father  
was well known. His Acquaintance with  
*Aeneas*, to whose House he was carrying  
his little Grandson, argues him to be a  
Person of Condition. *Pantheus* after a  
short Relation of the Posture of Affairs, *Eneid. 2.*  
joyns *Aeneas's* little Handful of Men, Char-  
ges in with him when the Town was seiz'd,  
and fired, and at last dies handsomely in *Ibid.*  
the Action.

The next is *Anius* King of *Delos*, Prince  
and Priest in one Person.

*Rex Anius, Rex idem hominum Phabique* *Eneid. 3.*  
*Sacerdos.*

When *Aeneas* was outed at *Troy*, and  
in quest of a new Country, he came to  
an Anchor at *Delos*; *Anius* meets him in  
a Religious Habit, receives him civilly, *Ibid.*  
and obliges him with his Oracle. In the  
Book now mention'd, we have another of  
*Apollo's* Priests, his Name is *Hel-nus*, Son  
of *Priam* and King of *Chapnia*. He enter-  
tains *Aeneas* with a great deal of Friend-  
ship, and Magnificence, gives him many  
material Directions, and makes him a rich  
Present at parting. To this Prince, if you  
I 2 please,

## The Clergy Abused

*Enid.*  
1/1.*En. 6.**ibid.*

please, we may joyn a Princess of the same Profession; and that is *Rhea Sylvia*, Daughter to *Numitor* King of *Alba*, and Mother to *Romulus*, and *Remus*. This Lady *Virgil* calls ——— *Regina Sacerdos*, a Royal Priestess. Farther: When *Aeneas* made a Visit upon Business to the Shades below, He had for his Guide, the famous *Sibylla Cumæa*, who belong'd to *Apollo*. When he came thither, amongst the rest of his Acquaintance, he saw *Polybates* a Priest of *Ceres*. This *Polybates* is mention'd with the three Sons of *Antenor*, with *Glaucus*, and *Thersilocus*, who commanded in Chief in the *Trojan Auxiliaries*: So that you may know his Quality by his Company. When *Aeneas* had pass'd on farther, he saw *Orpheus* in *Elysium*: The Poet calls him the *Thracian Priest*. There needs not be much said of *Orpheus*: He is famous for his Skill in Musick, Poetry, and Religious Ceremonies: He was one of the Hero's of Antiquity, and a principal Adventurer in the Expedition of the *Golden Fleece*.

In the Seventh *Æneid*, the Poet gives in a List of the Princes, and General Officers who came into the Assistance of *Trojan*; Amongst the rest he tells you,

*Quin & Marrubia venit de gente Sacerdos,  
Archippi regis missu fortissimus Umbrō.*

This Priest he commends both for his Courage and his Skill in Physick, Natural Magick, and Philosophy. He understood the Vertues of Plants, and could lay Passions and Poisons asleep. His Death was extremely regretted by his Country, who made a Pompous and Solemn Mourning for him.

*Te nemus Angitia vitrea te Fucius, unda,  
Te liquidi fervere lacus.*

*Aeneid. 7.*

The *Potitii*, and the *Pinari* mention'd *Aeneid. 8.* were as *Livy* observes, chosen out of the first Quality of the Country, and had the Priesthood hereditary to their Family. To go on, *Aemonides*, and *Chlorens* make a glistering Figure in the Field, and are very remarkable for the Curiosity of their Armour, and Habit. *Aemonides's* Finery is pass'd over in general.

*Lib. 1.*

*Totus collucens veste atque insignibus armis.*

*Aeneid. 10.*

But the Equipage of *Chlorens* is flourish'd out at length, and as I remember, admired by *Macrobius* as one of the Master-pieces

## The Clergy Abused

*Aeneid.*  
11.

*Aeneid.* 9.  
10. 11.

pieces of *Virgil* in Description. In short, He is all Gold, Purple, Scarlet, and Embroidery; and as rich as Nature, Art, and Rhetorick can make him. To these I might add *Rhamnes*, *Afyllas*, and *Tolumnius*, who were all Persons of Condition, and had Considerable Posts in the Army.

*Guther.*  
*de iure Vo-*  
*ser. pontif.*

It may be these last were not strictly Priests. Their Function was rather *Prophetick*. They interpreted the Resolutions of the Gods, by the voice of Birds, the Inspection of Sacrifices, and their Observations of Thunder. This made their Character counted Sacred, and their Relation to the Deity particular. And therefore the *Romans* ranged them in the Order of the *Priests*.

Thus we see the admired *Homer*, and *Virgil*, always treat the *Priests* fairly, and describe them in Circumstances of Credit: If 'tis said, that the Instances I have given, are mostly in Names of *Fiction*, and in persons who had no Being, unless in the Poet's fancy. I answer, I am not concern'd in the History of the Relation. Whether the Muster be true or false, 'tis all one to my purpose. This is certain, had the *Priests* been People of such slender Consideration as our *Stage-Poets* endeavour to make them; they must have

ap-

appear'd in a different Figure; or rather, have been left out as too little for that sort of Poem. But *Homer* and *Virgil* had other Sentiments of Matters: They were govern'd by the Reason of Things, and the common usage of the World. They knew the *Priesthood* a very reputable Employment, and always esteem'd as such. To have us'd the *Priests* ill, they must have call'd their own Discretion in question: They must have run into impropriety, and fallen foul upon Custom, Manners, and Religion. Now 'twas not their way to play the Knave and the Fool together: They had more Sense than to do a silly thing, only for the Satisfaction of doing an ill one.

I shall now go on, to enquire what the Greek *Tragedians* will afford us upon the present Subject. There are but two Plays in *Æschylus*, where the *Ministers* of the Gods are represented. The one is in his *Eumenides*, and here *Apollo's Priestess* only opens the Play, and appears no more. The other is in his *Siege of Thebes*. In this Tragedy, the Prophet *Amphiarans* is one of the Seven Commanders against the Town. He has the Character of a Modest, Brave Officer, and of one who rather affected to be great in Action, than Noise.

## The Clergy Abused

In *Sophocles's Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Jupiter's Priest* has a short part. He appears at the Head of an *Address*, and delivers the Harangue by the King's Order. *Oedipus* in his Passion treats *Tiresias* ruggedly; *Tiresias* replies with Spirit and Freedom, and plainly tells him he was none of his *Servant*, but *Apollo's*.

*Oedip. Tyr.*  
p. 148.

*Ibid.* 169. \*Οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ σοὶ ζῶ δούλος ἀλλὰ Ἀπόλλωνος.

And here we may observe that all *Oedipus* his reproaches relate to *Tiresias's* person, there is no such Thing as a general Imputation upon his Function: But the *English Oedipus* makes the *Priest-hood* an imposturous Profession; and rails at the whole *Order*. In the next Tragedy, *Creon* charges *Tiresias* with subornation; and that he intended to make a Penny of his Prince. The *Priest* holds up his Character, speaks to the ill Usage with an Air of gravity, calls the King *Son*, and foretells him his Misfortune.

*Antig. p.*  
256, 258.

To go on to *Euripides*, for *Sophocles* has nothing more. This Poet in his *Phanissa* brings in *Tiresias* with a very unacceptable report from the *Oracle*. He tells *Creon* that either his Son must die, or the City be lost: *Creon* keeps himself within Temper, and gives no ill Language. And even when



when *Menaeus* had kill'd himself, he neither complains of the Gods, nor reproaches the Prophet. *Eurip. Phoeniss. p. 138, 139.*

In his *Baccha*, *Tiresias* is honourably used by *Cadmus*; and *Pentheus* who threatened him, is afterwards Punish'd for his Impiety. In another Play, *Apollo's Priestess* comes in upon a creditable account, and is respectfully Treated. *Iphigenia Agamemnon's Daughter* is made Priestess to *Diana*; and her Father thought himself happy in her Employment. These are all the Priests I remember, represented in *Euripides*. To conclude the ancient Tragedians together: *Seneca* seems to follow the Conduct of *Euripides*, and secures *Tiresias* from being outraged. *Oedipus* carries it smoothly with him, and only desires him to out with the Oracle, and declare the Guilty Person. This *Tiresias* excuses, and afterwards the Heat of the expostulation falls upon *Creon*. *Calchas*, if not strictly a Priest, was an *Augur*, and had a Religious Relation. Upon this account, *Agamemnon* calls him interpreter Deorum; The Reporter of Fate, and the God's Nuntio; And gives him an honourable Character. *Iphig. in Aulid. G. in Taur. Oedip. Troad. A. 2. p. 193.*

This Author is done; I shall therefore pass on to the Comedians. And here, *Aristophanes* is so declared an Atheist, that

## The Clergy Abused

I think him not worth the citing. Besides, he has but little upon the Argument. And where he does engage it, the *Priests* have every jot as good Quarter as the Gods.

*Plut. Rem. As for Terence, he neither represents any*  
*Aves. Priests, nor so much as mentions them.*  
*Chrysalus in Plautus describes Theotimus*  
*Diana's Priest, as a Person of Quality, and*  
*Figure. In his Rudens, we have a Priest-*  
*Bacchid. ess upon the Stage, which is the only In-*  
*Act. 2. 5. 3. stance in this Poet. She entertains the*  
*two Women who were wrecked, and is*  
*commended for her hospitable Temper.*  
*The Procurer Labrax swaggers that he will*  
*Rud. A. 1. force the Temple, and begins the Attack.*  
*5. A. 2. 3. Demades a Gentleman, is surprized at his*  
*Insolence, and threatens him with Revenge.*  
*The report of so bold an attempt made him*  
*cry out* *Quis homo est tanta confidentia;*  
*qui sacerdotem audeat violare?* It seems  
 in those Days, 'twas very infamous to affront a *Holy Character*, and break in upon the *Guards of Religion*! Thus we see, how the Ancient Poets behaved themselves in the Argument. *Priests* seldom appear in their *Plays*. And when they come, 'tis Business of Credit that brings them. They are treated like Persons of Condition. They Act up to their Relation; neither sneak, nor prevaricate, nor do any thing unbecoming their Office.

And

And now a word or two of the *Moderns*.

The famous *Corneille* and *Moliere*, bring no *Priests* of any kind upon the *Stage*, The former leaves out *Tiresias* in his *Oedipus*: tho' this Omission baulks his thought, and maims the *Fable*. What therefore but regard to Religion could keep him from the use of this Liberty? As I am inform'd, the same reservedness is practis'd in *Spain*, and *Italy*: And that there is no Theatre in *Europe*, excepting the *English*, that entertains the *Audience* with *Priests*.

This is certainly the right Method, and best secures the Out-works of Piety. The Holy Function is much too Solemn to be play'd with. Christianity is for no Fooling: Neither the *Place*, the *Occasion*, nor the *Actors* are fit for such a Representation. To bring the *Church* into the *Play-House*, is the way to bring the *Play-House* into the *Church*. 'Tis apt to turn Religion into *Romance*; and make unthinking People conclude, that all Serious Matters are nothing but *Farce*, *Fiction*, and *Design*. 'Tis true, the *Tragedies* at *Athens* were a sort of *Homilies*, and design'd for the Instruction of the People. To this purpose, they are all Clean, Solemn, and Sententious. *Plautus* likewise informs us that the *Comedians* used to teach the People Morality. The

Rud. A. 4.  
S. 7.  
The  
case

## The Clergy Abused

case standing thus, 'tis less surprising to find the *Priests* sometimes appear. The Play had grave Argument, and Pagan Indulgence, to plead in its behalf. But our Poets steer by another *Compass*: Their Aim is to *destroy* Religion, their *Preaching* is against *Sermons*; and their Business, but Diversion at the best. In short, Let the Character be never so well managed, no Christian Priest (especially) ought to come upon the *Stage*. For where the Business is an Abuse, and the Place a Profanation, the demureness of the Manner, is but a poor excuse. Monsieur *Racine* is an Exception to what I have observ'd in *France*. In his *Athalie*, *Joida* the *High-Priest* has a large part. But, then the Poet does him Justice in his Station; he makes him Honest and Brave, and gives him a shining Character throughout. *Mathan* is another *Priest* in the same Tragedy. He turns Renegado, and revolts from God to *Baal*. He is a very ill Man, but makes a considerable Appearance, and is one of the Top of *Athalie's* Faction. And as for the *Blemishes* of his Life, they all stick upon his own Honour, and reach no farther than his Person: In fine, the Play is a very Religious Poem; 'Tis upon the Matter, all *Sermon* and *Anthem*. And if it were not design'd for the *Theatre*, I have nothing to Object.

Let

Let us now just look over our own Country-men, till King Charles the Second. *Shakespear* takes the Freedom to represent the *Clergy* in several of his *Plays*: But for the most part, he holds up the *Function*, and makes them neither Act, nor Suffer any thing unhandsome. In one Play or two, he is much bolder with the *Order*.

\* *Sr. Hugh Evans* a Priest is too Comical and Secular in his Humour. How-

ever he understands his Post, and converses with the Freedom of a Gentleman. I

grant in *Love's Labour lost*, the Curate plays the Fool egregiously; and so does the Poor too; for the whole Play is a very silly one. In the History of *Sr. John Old-*

*Castle*, *Sr. John Parson* of *Wrotham* swears, games, wenches, pads, tilts, and drinks:

This is extremely bad, and like the Author of the *Relapse*, &c. Only with this

difference; *Shakespear's*, *Sr. John* has some Advantage in his Character. He appears

Loyal and Stout; He brings in *Sr. John*

*Willon*, and other Rebels Prisoners. He is rewarded by the King, and the Judge uses

him Civilly and with Respect. In short, He is represented Lewd, but not Little; And

the Disgrace falls rather on the Person than the Office. But the *Relapser's* Busi-

ness, is to sink the Notion, and Mur-  
der the Character, and make the Func-  
tion

\* Measure  
for Mea-  
sure. Much  
ado about  
Nothing.  
Twelf-

Night.

Henry 4th.

pt. 1st.

Hen. 6th.

p. 3d.

Romeo and

Juliet.

Merry

Wives of

Windser.

## The Clergy Abused

tion despicable: So that upon the whole, *Shakespear* is by much the gentiler Enemy.

Towards the end of the *Silent Woman*, *Ben. Johnson* brings in a *Clergy-man*, and a *Civilian* in their *Habits*. But then he premises a handsome Excuse, acquaints the *Audience*, that the *Persons* are but borrow'd, and throws in a *Salvo* for the Honour of either Profession. In the *Third Act*, we have another *Clergy-man*; He is abused by *Cutberd*, and a little by *Morose*. But his Lady checks him for the ill Breeding of the Usage. In his *Magnetic Lady*, *Tale of a Tub*, and *Sad Shepherd*, there are *Priests* who manage but un-wardly. But these *Plays* were his last Works, which *Mr. Dryden* calls his *Dorages*. This Author has no more *Priests*, and therefore we'll take leave.

*Beaumont* and *Fletcher* in the *Faithful Shepherdess*, *The False one* *A Wife for a Month*, and the *Knight of Malta*, give us both *Priests* and *Bishops*, part Heathen and part Christian: But all of them save their Reputation, and make a Creditable Appearance. The *Priests* in the *Scornful Lady*, and *Spanish Curate* are ill used. The first is made a Fool, and the other a Knave. Indeed, they seem to be brought in on purpose to make sport, and disserve Religion.

Essay of  
Dramat.  
&c.

Religion. And so much for *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*.

Thus we see the English Stage has always been out of Order, but never to the Degree 'tis at present.

I shall now take Leave of the Poets, and touch a little upon History and Argument.

And here I shall briefly shew the Right the Clergy have to Regard, and fair Usage, upon these Three following Accounts.

I. *Because of their Relation to the Duty.*

II. *Because of the Importance of their Office.*

III. *They have prescription for their Privilege. Their Function has been in Possession of Esteem in all Ages, and Countries.*

I. Upon the account of their Relation to the Duty.

The Holy Order is appropriated to the Divine Worship: And a Priest has the peculiar Honour to belong to nothing less than God Almighty. Now the Credit of the Service always rises in proportion to the Quality and Greatness of the Master. And for this Reason, 'tis more Honourable to serve a Prince, than a private Person. To apply this, Christian Priests are the Principal Ministers of God's Kingdom.

they

## The Clergy Abused

They represent his Person, publish his Laws, pass his Pardons, and preside in his Worship. To expose a *Priest*, much more to burlesque his Function, is an Affront to the Deity. All Indignities done to Ambassadors, are interpreted upon their Masters and Reveng'd as such. To outrage the *Ministers* of Religion, is in effect to deny the being, or providence of God; and to treat the *Bible* like a *Roman*. As much as to say, the Stories of another World are nothing but a little *Priestcraft*; and therefore I am resolv'd to lash the Profession. But to droll upon the Institution of God; to make his *Ministers* cheap, and his Authority contemptible; to do this is little less than open Defiance. 'Tis a sort of Challenge to a wallen his Vengeance, to exert his Omnipotence; and do Right to his Honour. If the Profession of a Courtier was unfashionable, a Prince's Commission thought a Scandal, and the *Magistracy* laugh'd at for their Business; the Monarch had need look to himself in time: He may conclude, his Person is despis'd, his Authority but a Jest, and the People ready either to change their Master, or to set up for themselves. Government and Religion, no less than *Trade* subsist upon Reputation. The true God, can't be Deposed; neither does



his Happiness depend upon Homage. But since he does not Govern by Omnipotence, since he leaves Men to their Liberty, Acknowledgment must sink, and Obedience decline, in proportion to the Lessenings of Authority. How provoking an Indignity of this kind must be, is easie to imagine.

II. The Functions and Authorities of Religion have a great Influence on Society. The Interest of this Life lies very much in the Belief of another. So that if our Hopes were bounded with Sight and Sense, if Eternity was out of the Case, General Advantage, and Publick Reason, and Secular Policy, would oblige us to be just to the Priesthood. For Priests, and Religion always stand and fall together; Now Religion is the Basis of Government, and Man is a wretched Companion without it. When Conscience takes its Leave, Good Faith, and Good Nature go with it. *Atheism* is all Self, Mean and Mercenary. The *Atheist* has no *Hereafter*, and therefore will be sure to make the most of this World. Interest, and Pleasure are the Gods he Worships, and to these he'll Sacrifice every Thing else.

III. The Priest-hood ought to be fairly treated, because it has Prescription for this Privilege. This is so evident a  
K Truth,

## The Clergy Abused

Truth, that there is hardly any Age or Country, but affords sufficient Proof. A just Discourse upon this Subject would be a large Book, but I shall just skim it over and pass on. And

1<sup>st</sup>. For the Jews. *Josephus* tells us, the Line of *Aaron* made some of the best Pedigrees, and that the *Priests* were reckon'd among the Principal Nobility.

*De Bell. Judaic.*

*Deut* 17.

9. 10.

2. *Chron.*

19. 8.

*Math.* 27.

*Act.* 4.

*Vid Selden*

*de Synedr.*

By the Old Testament we are inform'd that the *High-Priest* was the Second Person in the Kingdom. The Body of that Order had Civil Jurisdiction. And the *Priests* continued Part of the Magistracy in the time of our Saviour. *Jehoiada* the *High-Priest* was thought an Alliance big enough for the Royal Family. He Married the Kings Daughter; His Interest and Authority was so great that he broke the Usurpation under *Athalia*; and was at the Head of the Restauration. And lastly the *Assemonean* Race were both Kings and Priests.

2. *Chron.*

22. 23.

*Joseph.*

To Proceed. The *Egyptian* Monarchy was one of the most ancient and best-polish'd upon Record. Here Arts and Sciences, the Improvement of Reason, and the Splendor of Life had its first Rise. Hither 'twas that *Plato* and most of the Celebrated Philosophers travell'd for their Learning. Now in this Kingdom the

*Priests*

*Priests* made no vulgar Figure. These with the Military Men were the Body of the Nobility, and Gentry. Besides the Business of Religion, the *Priests* were the Publick *Annalists*, and kept the Records of *History*, and *Government*. They were many of them bred in Courts, formed the Education of their Princes, and assisted at their Councils. When *Joseph* Diod Sic. was Viceroy of *Egypt*, and in all the height of his Pomp, and Power, the King Married him to the Daughter of *Pharaoh* Gen. 41. *Priest* of *On*. The Text says *Pharaoh gave him her to Wife*. This shows the Match was deliberate Choice, and Royal Favour, no stooping of Quality, or Condescensions of Love, on *Joseph's* Side.

To pass on. The *Persian Magi*, and the *Druids* of *Gaul* were of a Religious Profession, and consign'd to the Service of the Gods. Now all these were at the upper End of the Government, and had a great share of Regard and Authority. Porph. de Abst. The Body of the *Indians*, as *Diodorus Siculus* reports, is divided into Seven parts. Lib. 4. Caesar de Bell. Gall. Lib. 6. The first is the *Clan* of the *Bramines* the *Priests*, and Philosophers of that Country. 'This Division is the least in Number, but the first in Degree. Their Privileges are extraordinary. They are ex-

## The Clergy Abused

empted from Taxes, and Live Independent of Authority. They are called to the Sacrifices, and take care of Funerals; They are look'd on as the Favourites of the Gods, and thought skilful in the Doctrins of another Life: And upon these accounts are largely consider'd in Presents, and Acknowledgement. The Priestesses of *Argos* were so Considerable, that *Time* is dated from them, and they stand for a Reign in *Chronology*. The Brave *Romans* are commended by *Polybius* for their Devotion to the Gods; Indeed they gave great Proof of their being in earnest; For when their Chief Magistrates, their Consuls themselves, met any of the *Vestals*, they held down their *Fasces*, and stoop'd their *Sword* and *Mace* to Religion.

Lib. 6.

Sen. in  
Controv.

The Priesthood was for some time confin'd to the *Patrician* Order, that is, to the Upper Nobility. And afterwards the Emperours were generally High-Priests themselves. The *Romans* in distress endeavour'd to make Friends with *Coriolanus* whom they had banish'd before. To this purpose they furnish'd out several Solemn Embassays. Now the Regulation of the Ceremony, and the Remarks of the Historian, plainly discover that the Body of the Priests were thought not inferior

Dion Ha-  
lic.

to any other. One Testimony from Tully and I have done. 'Tis in his Harangue to the College of the *Priests*. *Cum multa divinitus, Pontifices, a majoribus nostris inventa atque instituta sunt; tum nihil preclarior quam quod vos eosdem & Religionibus Deorum immortalium, & summa Republica praeesse voluerunt, &c. i. e. Amongst the many laudable Instances of our Ancestors Prudence, and Capacity, I know nothing better contrived than their placing your Order at the Helm, and setting the same Persons at the Head both of Religion and Government.* Thus we see what Rank the Priesthood held among the *Jews*, and how Nature taught the *Heathen* to regard it. And is it not now possess'd of as fair pretences as formerly? Is Christianity any disadvantage to the Holy Office. And does the Dignity of a Religion lessen the Publick Administrations in't? The *Priests* of the most High God and of Idolatry, can't be compared without Injury. To argue for the Preference is a Reflection upon the Creed. 'Tis true, the *Jewish Priest-hood* was instituted by God: But every Thing Divine is not of Equal Consideration. Realities are more valuable than Types; And as the Apostle argues, the Order of *Melchizedeck* is greater than that of *Aaron*. The Author, ( I mean the immediate

Pro Dom  
ad Pontif.

Hebr. 7.

## The Clergy Abused

diate one, ) the Authorities, the Business, and the End, of the *Christian Priest-hood*, are more Noble than those of the *Jewish*. For is not *Christ* greater than *Moses*, *Heaven* better than the Land of *Canaan*, and the *Eucharist* to be prefer'd to all the *Sacrifices*, and *Expiations* of the *Law*? Thus the Right, and the Reason of Things stands. And as for *Fact*, the Christian World have not been backward in their Acknowledgments. Ever since the first Conversion of Princes, the *Priest-hood* has had no small share of Temporal Advantage. The *Codes*, *Novels*, and *Church-History*, are sufficient Evidence what Sense *Constantine* and his Successors had of these Matters. But I shall not detain the Reader in remote Instances.

To proceed then to Times and Countries more generally known. The People of *France* are branched into three Divisions, of these the *Clergy*, are the First. And in consequence of this Privilege, at the Assembly of the *States*, they are first admitted to Harangue before the King.

In *Hungary* the *Bishops* are very Considerable, and some of them great Officers of State. In *Poland* they are *Senators*, that is part of the Upper Nobles. In *Muscovy* the *Bishops* have an Honourable Station; and the Present *Czar* is descended from

*Davila*  
*Filmer*  
*Freehold-*  
*ers Grand*  
*Inq.*

*Miræus* De  
*Stat. Re-*  
*lig. Christ.*  
*Miræus*  
*Ibid.*

from the *Patriarchal Line*. I suppose I need say nothing of *Italy*. In *Spain* the *Sees* generally are better endow'd than elsewhere, and Wealth always draws Consideration. The *Bishops* hold their Land's by a Military Noble *Tenure*, and are excused from Personal Attendance. And to come toward an end; They are Earls and Dukes in *France*, and Sovereign Princes in *Germany*. In *England* the *Bishops* are Lords of Parliament: And the *Law* in plain words distinguishes the *Upper-House* into the *Spiritual* and *Temporal Nobility*. And several *Statutes* call the *Bishops Nobles* by direct Implication. To mention nothing more, their *Heraldry* is regulated by *Garter*, and *Blazon'd* by *Stones*, which none under the *Nobility* can pretend to. In this Country of ours, Persons of the First Quality have been in *Orders*: To give an Instance of some few. *Odo* Brother to *William* the Conqueror was *Bishop* of *Baieux*, and Earl of *Kent*. King *Stephen's* Brother was *Bishop* of *Winchester*. *Nevill Arch-Bishop* of *Tork* was Brother to the Great Earl of *Warwick*, and *Cardinal Pool* was of the Royal Family. To come a little lower, and to our own Times. And here we may reckon not a few Persons of Noble Descent in Holy *Orders*. Witness the *Berklyes*, *Comptons*, *Montagues*, *Crews*,

*Fletchers,*  
*Embassy.*  
*Puffendorf*  
*Introduction*  
*on a l'Hi-*  
*stoire.*

*Heylins*  
*Cosmog.*

23 Hen.  
8. cap.  
22.  
26, Hen. 8.  
cap. 2.  
1. Edw.  
6. cap.  
12, &c.  
Preamb.

## The Clergy Abused

and *Norths*; The *Annesleys*, *Finches*, *Grayhams*, &c. And as for the Gentry, there are not many good Families in *England*, but either have, or have had a *Clergy-man* in them.

In short; The *Priest-hood* is the profession of a Gentleman. A Parson notwithstanding the ignorant Pride of some People, is a Name of Credit, and Authority, both in Religion, and Law. The *Addition* of *Clerk* is at least equal to that of Gentleman. Were it otherwise, the *Profession* would in many cases be a kind of Punishment. But the *Law* is far from being so singular as to make *Orders* a Disadvantage to *Degree*. No, The Honour of the Family continues, and the *Heraldry* is every jot as safe in the *Church*, as 'twas in the *State*. And yet when the *Laity* are taken leave of, not *Gentleman* but *Clerk* is usually written. This Custom is an argument the Change is not made for the worse, that the Spiritual Distinction is as valuable as the other; And to speak Modestly, that the first *Addition* is not lost, but Cover'd. Did the Subject require it, this Point might be farther made good. For the stile of a higher Secular Honour is continued as well with *Priest-hood* as without it. A Churchman who is either *Baronet*, or *Baron*, writes



writes himself so, notwithstanding his *Clerkship*. Indeed we can't well imagine the Clergy degraded from Paternal Honour without a strange Reflection on the Country; without supposing *Julian* at the Helm, the *Laws* Antichristian, and *Infidelity* in the very *Constitution*. To make the Ministers of Religion less upon the score of their Function, would be a Penalty on the *Gospel*, and a contempt of the God of Christianity. 'Tis our Saviours reasoning; *He that despises you despises Me, and he that despises Me, despises Him that sent me.* *S. Luke*  
10.

I hope what I have offer'd on this Subject will not be misunderstood. There is no Vanity in necessary Defence. To wipe off Aspersions, and rescue Things from Mistake, is but bare Justice: Besides, where the Honour of God, and the Publick Interest are concern'd, a Man is bound to speak. To argue from a resembling Instance. He that has the Kings Commission ought to Maintain it. To let it suffer under Rudeness is to betray it. To be tame and silent in such cases, is not Modesty but Meanness. Humility obliges no Man to desert his Trust; to throw up his Privilege, and prove false to his Character. And is our Saviour's Authority inferiour to that of Prince's? Are the Kingdoms of this World more Glorious

## The Clergy Abused

rious then that of the next? And can the Concerns of Time be greater than those of Eternity? If not, the reasoning above-mention'd must hold in the Application.

And now by this time I conceive the ill Manners of the *Stage* may be in some measure apparent; And that the *Clergy* deserve none of that Coarse Usage which it puts upon them. I confess I know no *Profession* that has made a more creditable Figure. That has better Customs for their Privileges, and better Reasons to maintain them. And here setting aside the point of Conscience; where lies the Decency of falling foul upon this *Order*? What Propriety is there in Misrepresentation? In confounding Respects, disguising Features, and painting Things out of all Colour and Complexion? This crossing upon Nature and Reason, is great Ignorance, and out of Rule. And now what Pleasure is there in Misbehaviour and Abuse? Is it such an Entertainment to see Religion worry'd by Atheism, and Things the most Solemn and Significant tumbled and tost by Buffoons? A man may laugh at a Puppy's tearing a Wardrobe, but I think 'twere altogether as discreet to beat him off. Well! but the *Clergy* mismanage sometimes, and they must be told of their Faults. What then? Are the *Poets* their *Ordinaries*? Is the *Pulpit* under the Discipline

cipline of the *Stage*? And are those fit to correct the Church, that are not fit to come into it? Besides, What makes them fly out upon the *Function*; and rail by wholesale? Is the *Priesthood* a crime, and the service of God a Disadvantage? I grant Persons and Things are not always suited. A good *Post* may be ill kept, but then the Censure should keep close to the Fault and the Office not suffer for the Manager. The *Clergy* may have their Failings sometimes like others, but what then? The *Character* is still untarnish'd. The *Men* may be Little but the *Priests* are not so. And therefore like other People, they ought to be treated by their best Distinction.

If 'tis Objected that the *Clergy* in *Plays* are commonly *Chaplains*, And that these *Belonging* to Persons of Quality they were obliged to represent them servile and submissive. To this I Answer

1<sup>st</sup>. In my former remark, that the *Stage* often outrages the whole *Order*, without regard to any particular Office. But were it not so, in the

2<sup>d</sup>. Place, They quite overlook the Character, and mistake the Business of *Chaplains*. They are no *Servants*, neither do they *Belong* to any *Body*, but God Almighty. This Point I have fully proved in another *Treatise*, and thither I refer the Reader.

Moral  
Essays.

## CHAP. IV.

*The Stage-Poets make their Principal Persons Vicious, and reward them at the End of the Play.*

THE Lines of Virtue and Vice are Struck out by Nature in very Legible Distinctions; They tend to a different Point, and in the greater Instances the Space between them is easily perceiv'd. Nothing can be more unlike than the Original Forms of these Qualities: The First has all the sweetness, Charms, and Graces imaginable; The other has the Air of a *Post* ill Carved into a *Monster*, and looks both foolish and Frightful together. These are the Native Appearances of Good and Evil: And they that endeavour to blot the Distinctions, to rub out the Colours, or change the Marks, are extreamly to blame. 'Tis confessed as long as the Mind is awake, and Conscience goes true, there's no fear of being imposed on. But when Vice is varnish'd over with Pleasure, and comes in the Shape of Convenience, the case grows somewhat dangerous; for then the

the Fancy may be gain'd, and the Guards corrupted, and Reason suborn'd against it self. And thus a *Disguise* often passes when the Person would otherwise be stop'd. To put *Lewdness* into a Thriving condition, to give it an Equipage of Quality, and to treat it with Ceremony and Respect, is the way to confound the Understanding, to fortifie the Charm, and, to make the Mischief invincible. Innocence is often owing to Fear, and Appetite is kept under by Shame; But when these Restraints are once taken off, when Profit and Liberty lie on the same side, and a Man can Debauch himself into Credit. what can be expected in such a case, but that Pleasure should grow absolute, and Madness carry all before it? The *Stage* seems eager to bring Matters to this Issue; They have made a considerable progress, and are still pushing their Point with all the Vigour imaginable. If this be not their Aim why is *Lewdness* so much consider'd in Character and Success? Why are their Favourites Atheistical, and their fine Gentlemen Debauched? To what purpose is *Vice* thus prefer'd, thus ornamented, and caress'd, unless for Imitation? That matter of Fact stands thus, I shall make good by several Instances. To begin then with their Men of Breeding and  
Figure.

# Immorality Encouraged

Mock A-  
strol. p. 3  
22c.

Mock A-  
strol. p. 57-  
39.

Spanish  
Fryar. p.  
61.

Country  
Wife. p.  
25.

Old Batch.  
Double  
Dealer. p.  
34.

Love for  
Love. p.  
50.

Love for  
Love. p.  
6, 7. 25.  
61. 89.  
91.

Figure. *Wild-blood* sets up for *Debauchery*, Ridicules Marriage, and Swears by *Mahomet*. *Bellamy* makes sport with the Devil, and *Lorenzo* is vicious and calls his Father *Bawdy Magistrate*. *Horner* is horridly Smutty, and *Harcourt* false to his Friend who used him kindly. In the *Plain-Dealer* *Freeman* talks coarsely, cheats the Widow, debauches her Son, and makes him undutiful. *Bellmour* is Lewd and Profane, and *Mellefont* puts *Careless* in the best way he can to debauch *Lady Plyant*. These *Sparks* generally Marry the Top-Ladies, and those that do not, are brought to no penance, but go off with the Character of Fine Gentlemen: In *Don-Sebastian*, *Antonio* an Atheistical Bully is rewarded with the Lady *Moraima*, and half the *Mufti's* Estate. *Valentine* in *Love for Love* is (if I may so call him) the Hero of the Play; this Spark the Poet would pass for a Person of Virtue, but he speaks too late. 'Tis true, He was hearty in his Affection to *Angelica*. Now without question, to be in Love with a fine Lady of 30000 Pounds is a great Virtue! But then abating this single Commendation, *Valentine* is altogether compounded of Vice. He is a prodigal Debauchee, Unnatural and Profane, Obscene, Sawcy, and Uudutiful, And yet this Libertine

bertine is crown'd for the Man of Merit, has his Wishes thrown into his Lap, and makes the Happy *Exit*. I perceive we should have a rare Set of *Virtues* if these *Poets* had the making of them! How they hug a Vicious Character, and how profuse are they in their Liberalities to Lewdness? In the *Provok'd Wife* Constant Swears at Length, solicits Lady Brute, Confesses himself Lewd, and prefers Debauchery to Marriage. He handles the last Subject very notably and worth the Hearing. *There is (says he) a poor sordid Slavery in Marriage, that turns the flowing Tide of Honour, and sinks it to the lowest ebb of Infamy. 'Tis a Corrupted Soil, Ill Nature, Avarice, Sloth, Cowardice, and Dirt, are all its Product — But then Constancy (alias Whoring) is a Brave, Free, Haughty Generous Agent.* This is admirable stuff both for the Rhetorick and the Reason! The Character of *Young Fashion* in the *Re-* 35  
*lapse* is of the same Stauchness, but this the Reader may have in another Place.

To sum up the Evidence. A fine Gentleman, is a fine Whoring, Swearing, Smutty, Atheistical Man. These Qualifications it seems compleat the *Idea* of Honour. They are the Top-Improvements of Fortune, and the distinguishing Glories of Birth and Breeding! This is  
the



## Immorality Encouraged

The *Stage-Test* for *Quality*, and those that can't stand it, ought to be *Disclaim'd*. The Restraints of Conscience and the Pedantry of Virtue, are unbecoming a Cavalier: Future Securities, and Reaching beyond Life, are vulgar Provisions: If he falls a-Thinking at this rate, he forfeits his Honour; For his Head was only made to run against a Post! Here you have a Man of Breeding and Figure, that burlesques the *Bible*, Swears, and talks Smut to Ladies, speaks ill of his Friend behind his Back, and betrays his Interest. A fine Gentleman that has neither Honesty, nor Honour, Conscience, nor Manners, Good Nature, nor civil Hypocrisie: Fine, only in the Insignificancy of Life, the Abuse of Religion, and the Scandals of Conversation. These Worshipful Things are the *Poet's* Favorites: They appear at the Head of the *Fashion*; and shine in Character, and Equipage. If there is any Sense stirring, They must have it, tho' the rest of the *Stage* suffer never so much by the Partiality. And what can be the Meaning of this wretched Distribution of Honour? Is it not to give Credit and Countenance to Vice, and to shame young People out of all pretence to Conscience, and Regularity? They seem forc'd to turn Lewd in their own Defence: They can't other-  
wise



wife justify themselves to the Fashion, nor keep up the Character of Gentlemen: Thus People not well furnish'd with Thought, and Experience, are debauch'd both in Practice and Principle. And thus Religion grows uncreditable, and passes for ill Education. The *Stage* seldom gives Quarter to any Thing that's serviceable or Significant, but persecutes Worth, and Goodness under every Appearance. He that would be safe from their Satir must take care to disguise himself in Vice, and hang out the *Colours* of Debauchery. How often is Learning, Industry, and Frugality, ridiculed in Comedy? The rich Citizens are often Misers, and Cuckolds, and the *Universities*, Schools of Pedantry upon this score. In short; Libertinism and Profaneness, Dressing, Idleness, and Gallantry, are the only valuable Qualities. As if People were not apt enough of themselves to be Lazy, Lewd, and Extravagant, unless they were prick'd forward, and provok'd by Glory, and Reputation. Thus the Marks of Honour, and Infamy are misapply'd, and the Idea's of Virtue and Vice confounded. Thus Monstrousness goes for Proportion, and the Blemishes of Human Nature, make up the Beauties of it.

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## Immorality Encouraged

Don Sebast.  
Love for  
Love. p. 20.  
Provok'd  
Wife p. 64.  
Chap. 1.  
& 2.

The fine Ladies are of the same Cut with the Gentlemen; *Moraima* is Scandalously rude to her Father, helps him to beating, and runs away with *Antonio*. *Angelica* talks sawcily to her Uncle, and *Belinda* confesses her Inclination for a Gallant. And as I have observ'd already, the Toping Ladies in the *Mock Astrologer*, *Spanish Fryar*, *Country Wife*, *Old Batchelor*, *Orphan*, *Double Dealer*, and *Love Triumphant*, are smutty, and sometimes Profane.

And was Licentiousness and Irreligion, always a mark of Honour? No; I don't perceive but that the old Poets had another Notion of Accomplishment, and bred their People of Condition a different way. *Philolaches* in *Plautus* laments his being debauch'd; and dilates upon the Advantages of Virtue, and Regularity. *Lustules* another Young Gentleman disputes handsomly by himself against Lewdness. And the discourse between him and *Philus* is Moral, and well managed. And afterwards he lashes Luxury and Debauching with a great deal of Warmth, and Satire. *Chremes* in *Terence* is a modest young Gentleman, he is afraid of being surpriz'd by *Thais*, and seems careful not to sully his Reputation. And *Pamphilus* in *Hecyra* resolves rather to be govern'd by Duty, than Inclination.

Mosiel.

A. 1. 2.

Trinum.

A. 2. 1.

A. 2. 2.

Enuch.

A. 3. 3.

Hecyr.

A. 3. 4.

Plau

Plautus's *Pinacium* tells her Friend *Panegyris* that they ought to acquit themselves fairly to their Husbands, tho' These should fail in their Regards towards them, For all good People will do justice tho' they don't receive it. Lady Brute in the *Stich. A.*  
*Provok'd Wife* is govern'd by different <sup>1. 1.</sup> Maxims. She is debauch'd with ill Usage, says *Virtue is an Afs*, and a *Gallant's worth* <sup>p. 3.</sup> forty on't. *Pinacium* goes on to another Head of Duty, and declares that a Daughter can never respect her Father too much, and that Disobedience has a great deal of *Stich. A.*  
 Scandal, and Lewdness in't. The Lady <sup>1. 2.</sup> *Jacinta* as I remember does not treat her Father at this rate of Decency. Let us hear a little of her Behaviour. The *Mock Astrologer* makes the Men draw, and frights the Ladies with the Apprehension of a Quarrel. Upon this; *Theodosia* cries *what will become of us!* *Jacinta* answers, we'll lie for Company: *nothing vexes me but that I am not a Man, to have one thrust at that malicious old Father of mine, before I go.* <sup>p. 60.</sup>  
 Afterwards the old Gentleman *Alonzo* threatens his Daughters with a Nunnery *Jacinta* spurs again and says, *I would have thee to know thou graceless old Man, that I defy a Nunnery: name a Nunnery once more and I disown thee for my Father.* *I could* <sup>Ibid.</sup> carry on the Comparison between the old

## Immorality Encouraged

and Modern Poets somewhat farther. But this may suffice.

Thus we see what a fine time Lewd People have on the *English Stage*. No Censure, no mark of Infamy, no Mortification must touch them. They keep their Honour untarnish'd, and carry off the Advantage of their Character. They are set up for the Standard of Behaviour, and the Masters of Ceremony and Sense. And at last that the Example may work the better, they generally make them rich, and happy, and reward them with their own Desires.

Mr. Dryden in the *Preface* to his *Mock-Astrologer*, confesses himself blamed for this Practise. *For making debauch'd Persons his Protagonists, or chief Persons of the Drama; And for making them happy in the Conclusion of the Play, against the Law of Comedy, which is to reward Virtue, and punish Vice.* To this Objection He makes a lame Defence. And answers

1st. *That he knows no such Law constantly observ'd in Comedy by the Ancient or Modern Poets.* What then? Poets are not always exactly in Rule. It may be a good Law tho' 'tis not constantly observ'd, some Laws are constantly broken, and yet ne're the worse for all that. He goes on, and pleads the Authorities of *Plautus*, and *Terence*. I grant there are Instances of  
Favour

Favour to vicious young People in those Authors, but to this I reply

1<sup>st</sup>. That those *Poets* had a greater compass of Liberty in their Religion. Debauchery did not lie under those Discouragements of Scandal, and Penalty, with them as it does with us. Unless therefore He can prove *Heathenism*, and *Christianity* the same, his *Precedents* will do him little service.

2<sup>ly</sup>. *Horace* who was as good a judge of the Stage, as either of those *Comedians*, seems to be of another Opinion. He condemns the obscenities of *Plautus*, and tells you Men of Fortune and Quality in his time, would not endure immodest Satir. *De Art. Poet.* He continues, that Poets were formerly admired for the great services they did. For teaching Matters relating to Religion, and Government; For refining the Manners, tempering the Passions, and improving the Understandings of Mankind: For making them more useful in Domestick Relations, and the publick Capacities of Life. *Ibid.* This is a demonstration that Vice was not the Inclination of the Muses in those days; and that *Horace* believ'd the chief business of a *Poem* was, to Instruct the Audience. He adds farther that the *Chorus* ought to turn upon the Argument of the *Drama*, and support the Design of the *Acts*. That

## Immorality Encouraged

They ought to speak in Defence of Virtue, and Frugality, and show a Regard to Religion. Now from the Rule of the *Chorus*, we may conclude his Judgment for the *Play*. For as he observes, there must be a Uniformity between the *Chorus* and the *Acts*: They must have the same View, and be all of a Piece. From hence 'tis plain that *Horace* would have no Immoral *Characters* have either Countenance or good Fortune, upon the *Stage*. If 'tis said the very mention of the *Chorus* shews the Directions were intended for *Tragedy*. To this

I answer, that the Consequence is not good. For the use of a *Chorus* is not inconsistent with *Comedy*. The ancient *Comedians* had it. *Aristophanes* is an Instance. I know 'tis said the *Chorus* was left out in that they call the *New Comedy*. But I can't see the conclusiveness of this Assertion. For *Aristophanes* his *Plutus* is *New Comedy* with a *Chorus* in't. And *Aristotle* who lived after this Revolution of the *Stage*, mentions nothing of the Omission of the *Chorus*. He rather supposes its continuance by saying the *Chorus* was added by the Government long after the Invention of *Comedy*. 'Tis true *Plautus* and *Terence* have none, but those before them probably might. *Moliere* has now reviv'd them;

And

*Vid Schol.*

*Libr. de  
Poet. cap. 5.*

*Psyche.*

And *Horace* might be of his Opinion for ought we know to the contrary.

Lastly, *Horace* having expressly mentioned the beginning and progress of Comedy, discovers himself more fully: He advises a Poet to form his Work upon the Precepts of *Socrates* and *Plato*, and the Models of Moral Philosophy. This was the way to preserve Decency, and to assign a proper Fate and Behaviour to every Character. Now if *Horace* would <sup>*Ibid.*</sup> have his Poet govern'd by the Maxims of Morality, he must oblige him to Sobriety of Conduct, and a just distribution of Rewards, and Punishments.

Mr. *Dryden* makes *Homewards*, and endeavours to fortifie himself in Modern Authority. He lets us know that *Ben Johnson* after whom he may be proud to Err, gives him more than one example of this Conduct; That in the *Alchemist* is notorious, <sup>*Prof Mock Astrol.*</sup> where neither *Face* nor his Master are corrected according to their Demerits. But how Proud soever Mr. *Dryden* may be of an Error, he has not so much of *Ben Johnson's* company as he pretends. His Instance of *Face* &c. In the *Alchemist* is rather notorious against his Purpose than for it.

For *Face* did not Council his Master *Doveris* to debauch the Widow; neither

*Ibid.*

is it clear that the Matter went thus far. He might gain her consent upon Terms of Honour for ought appears to the contrary. 'Tis true *Face* who was one of the Principal Cheats is Pardon'd and consider'd: But then his Master confesses himself kind to a fault. He owns this Indulgence was a Breach of Justice, and unbecoming the Gravity of an old Man. And then desires the Audience to excuse him upon the Score of the Temptation. But *Face* continued in the Cousemage till the last without Repentance. Under favour I conceive this is a Mistake. For does not *Face* make an Apology before he leaves the Stage? Does he not set himself at the Bar, arraign his own Practise, and cast the Cause upon the Clemency of the Company? And are not all these Signs of the Dislike of what he had done? Thus careful the Poet is to prevent the Ill Impressions of his Play! He brings both Man and Master to Confession. He dismisses them like Malefactors; and moves for their Pardon before he gives them their Discharge. But the *Mock-Astrologer* has a gentler Hand: *Wild-Blood* and *Jacinta* are more generously used: There is no Acknowledgment exacted: no Hardship put upon them: They are permitted to talk on in their Libertine way to the



the Last: And take Leave without the least appearance of Reformation. The *Mock-Astrologer* urges *Ben Johnson's Silent Woman* as an other *Precedent* to his purpose. For *there Dauphine confesses himself in Love with all the Collegiate Lady's. And yet this naughty Dauphine is Crowned in the end with the Possession of his Uncle's Estate, and with the hopes of all his Mistresses.* *Ibid.* This Charge, as I take it, is somewhat too severe. I grant *Dauphin* Professes himself in Love with the Collegiate Ladies at first. But when they invited him to a private Visit, he makes them no Promise; but rather appears tired, and willing to disengage. *Dauphin* therefore is not altogether so naughty as this Author represents him.

*Ben Johnson's Fox* is clearly against Mr. *Dryden*. And here I have his own Confession for proof. He declares the *Poet's* *Essay of Drama-*  
*end in this Play was the Punishment of Vice, tick Po-*  
*and the Reward of Virtue.* *Ben* was forced *etry.*  
 to strain for this piece of Justice, and *p. 28.*  
 break through the *Unity of Design*. This Mr. *Dryden* remarks upon him: How ever he is pleased to commend the Performance, and calls it an excellent *Fifth Act*.

*Ben Johnson* shall speak for himself afterwards in the Character of a Critick;  
 In

## Immorality Encouraged

In the mean time I shall take a Testimony or two from *Shakespeare*. And here we may observe the admir'd *Falstaffe* goes off in Disappointment. He is thrown out of Favour as being a *Rake*, and dies like a Rat behind the Hangings. The Pleasure he had given, would not excuse him. The *Poet* was not so partial, as to let his Humour compound for his Lewdness. If 'tis objected that this remark is wide of the Point, because *Falstaffe* is represented in Tragedy, where the Laws of Justice are more strickly observ'd. To this I answer, that you may call *Henry* the Fourth and Fifth, Tragedies if you please. But for all that, *Falstaffe* wears no *Buskins*, his Character is perfectly Comical from end to end.

The Lon-  
don Prodi-  
gal.

The next Instance shall be in *Flowerdale* the *Prodigal*. This Spark notwithstanding his Extravagance, makes a lucky Hand on't at last, and marries up a rich Lady: But then the *Poet* qualifies him for his good Fortune, and mends his Manners with his Circumstances. He makes him Repent, and leave off his Intemperance, Swearing &c. And when his Father warn'd him against a Relapse, He answers very soberly,

Heaven helping me I'll hate the Course of Fleth.

I could give some Instances of this kind out of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, But there's no need of any farther Quotation; For *Mr. Dryden* is not satisfied with his Apology from Authority: He does as good as own that this may be construed no better than defending one ill Practise by another. To prevent this very reasonable objection he endeavours to vindicate his *Precedents* from the Reason of the Thing. To this purpose he makes a wide difference between the Rules of Tragedy and Comedy. That Vice must be impartially prosecuted in the first, because the Persons are Great &c.

It seems then Executions are only for Greatness and Quality. Justice is not to strike much lower than a Prince. Private People may do what they please. They are too few for Mischief, and too Little for Punishment! This would be admirable Doctrine for *Newgate*, and give us a general Goal-Delivery without more ado. But in Tragedy (says the *Mock-Astrologer*.) The Crimes are likewise Horrid, so that there is a necessity for Severity and Example. And how stands the matter in Comedy? Quite otherwise. There the Faults are but the sallies of Youth, *Ibid.* and the Frailties of Human Nature For Instance. There is nothing but a little Whoring, Pimping, Gaming, Profaneness &c. And who could be so hard hearted

## Immorality Encouraged

Ibid.

to give a Man any Trouble for This? Such Rigours would be strangely Inhumane! A Poet is a better natur'd Thing I can assure you. These little Miscarriages move Pity and Commiseration, and are not such as must of necessity be Punish'd. This is comfortable Casuistry! But to be Serious. Is Dissolution of Manners such a Peccadillo? Does a Profligate Conscience deserve nothing but Commiseration? And are People damn'd only for *Humane Frailties*? I perceive the Laws of Religion and those of the Stage differ extreamly! The strength of his Defence lies in this choice Maxim, that the *Chief End of Comedy is Delight*. He questions whether Instruction has any thing to do in Comedy. If it has, he is sure 'tis no more then its secondary end: For the business of the Poet is to make you laugh. Granting the Truth of this Principle, I somewhat question the serviceableness of it. For is there no Diversion to be had unless Vice appears prosperous, and rides at the Head of Success, One would think such a preposterous distribution of Rewards, should rather shock the Reason, and raise the Indignation of the Audience. To laugh without Reason is the Pleasure of Fools, and against it, of something worse. The exposing of Knavery, and making *Lewdness* ridiculous, is a much better occasion for Laughter.

And

And this with submission I take to be the End of *Comedy*. And therefore it does not differ from *Tragedy* in the End, but in the *Means*. Instruction is the principal Design of both. The one works by Terror, the other by Infamy. 'Tis true, they don't move in the same Line, but they meet in the same point at last. For this Opinion I have good Authority, besides what has been cited already.

1<sup>st</sup>. Monsieur *Rapin* affirms 'That Delight is the End that Poetry aims at, but 'not the Principal one. For Poetry being 'an Art, ought to be profitable by the quality of it's own nature, and by the Essential Subordination that all Arts should 'have to Polity, whose End in General is *Rapin Re-  
s. II, &c.  
p. 10.* 'the publick Good. This is the Judgment of *Aristotle* and of *Horace* his chief 'Interpreter. *Ben Johnson* in his Dedicatory Epistle of his *Fox* has somewhat considerable upon this Argument; And declaims with a great deal of zeal, spirit and good Sense, against the Licentiousness of the *Stage*. He lays it down for a Principle, 'That 'tis impossible to be a good Poet 'without being a good Man. That he '(a good Poet) is said to be able to inform 'young Men to all good Discipline, and 'enflame grown Men to all great Virtues '&c.— That the general complaint was 'that the *Writers* of those days had nothing

## Immorality Encouraged

' thing remaining in them of the Dignity  
 ' of a *Poet*, but the abused Name. That  
 ' now, especially in Stage Poetry, nothing  
 ' but Ribaldry, Profanation, *Blasphemy*, all  
 ' Licence of Offence to God and Man, is  
 ' practised. He confesses a great part of  
 ' this Charge is over-true, and is sorry he  
 ' dares not deny it. But then he hopes all  
 ' are not embark'd in this bold Adventure  
 ' for Hell. For my part ( says he ) I can,  
 ' and from a most clear Conscience affirm ;  
 ' That I have ever trembled to think to-  
 ' wards the least Profaneness, and loath'd  
 ' the Use of such foul, and unwash'd Baw-  
 ' dry, as is now made the Food of the *Scene*.  
 ' — The encrease of which Lust in Liber-  
 ' ty, what Learned or Liberal Soul does not  
 ' abhor? In whole *Enterludes* nothing but  
 ' the Filth of the Time is utter'd — with  
 ' Brothelry able to violate the Ear of a *Pa-*  
 ' *gan*, and *Blasphemy*, to turn the Blood of  
 ' a Christian to Water. He continues,  
 ' that the Insolence of these Men had  
 ' brought the *Muses* into Disgrace, and  
 ' made *Poetry* the lowest scorn of the Age.  
 ' He appeals to his Patrons the *Universities*,  
 ' that his Labour has been heretofore, and  
 ' mostly in this his latest Work, to reduce  
 ' not only the ancient Forms, but Manners  
 ' of the *Scene*, the Innocence and the Doc-  
 ' trine, which is the principal End of *Poesy*,

to inform Men in the best Reason of Living. Lastly he adds, 'that he has imitated the Conduct of the Ancients in this Play, The goings out (or Conclusions) of whose Comedies, were not always joyful but oft-times the Bawds, the Slaves, the Rivals, yea and the Masters are Multed, and fitly, it being the Office of a Comick Poet (mark that!) to imitate Justice, and Instruct to Life &c. Say you so! Why then if Ben Johnson knew any thing of the Matter, Divertisment and Laughing is not as Mr Dryden affirms, the Chief End of Comedy. This Testimony is so very full and clear, that it needs no explaining, nor any enforcement from Reasoning, and Consequence.

And because Laughing and Pleasure has such an unlimited Prerogative upon the Stage, I shall add a Citation or two from Aristotle concerning this Matter. Now this great Man 'calls those Buffoons, and Impertinents, who rally without any regard to Persons or Things, to Decency, or good Manners. That there is a great difference between Ribaldry, and handsome Rallying. He that would perform exactly must keep within the Character of Virtue, and Breeding. He goes on, and tells us that the old Comedians entertain'd the Audience with Smut, but the Modern

## Immorality Encouraged

*Libr. 4. de.  
Morib.  
cap. 14.*

‘Modern ones avoided that Liberty, and  
‘grew more reserv’d. This latter way he  
‘says was much more proper and Gentile  
‘then the other. That in his Opinion  
‘Rallying, no less than Railing, ought to  
‘be under the Discipline of Law; That  
‘he who is ridden by his *Jests*, and minds  
‘nothing but the business of *Laughing*, is  
‘himself Ridiculous. And that a Man of  
‘Education and Sense, is so far from going  
‘these Lengths that he won’t so much as  
‘endure the hearing some sort of Buf-  
‘foonry.

And as to the point of Delight in ge-  
neral, the same Author affirms, ‘that scan-  
‘dalous Satisfactions are not properly  
‘Pleasures. ’Tis only Distemper, and false  
‘Appetite which makes them Palatable.  
‘And a Man that is sick, seldom has his  
‘Tast true. Besides, supposing we throw  
‘Capacity out of the Question, and make  
‘Experiment and Sensation the Judge;  
‘Granting this, we ought not to chop  
‘at every Bait, nor Fly out at every  
‘Thing that strikes the Fancy. The meer  
‘Agreableness must not overbear us, with-  
‘out distinguishing upon the Quality, and  
‘the Means. Pleasure how charming so-  
‘ever, must not be fetched out of Vice.  
‘An Estate is a pretty thing, but if we  
‘purchase by Falshood, and Knavery,

‘we



‘Knavery, we pay too much for’t. Some  
 ‘Pleasures are Childish, and others abominable; And upon the whole, pleasure, *De Mor.*  
 ‘absolutely speaking, is no good Thing. *Lib. 10.*  
 And so much for the Philosopher. And *cap. 2.*  
 because *Ribaldry* is used for Sport, a passage or two from *Quintilian*, may not be unseasonable. This Orator does not only  
 Condemn the grosser Instances, but cuts off all the *Double-Entendre’s* at a Blow.  
 He comes up to the Regularity of Thought, and tells us ‘that the Meaning, as well as  
 ‘the Words of Discourse must be unsullied. *Institut.*  
 And in the same Chapter he adds that ‘A *Lib. 6.*  
 ‘Man of Probity has always a Reserve *cap. 3.*  
 ‘in his Freedoms, and Converſes within  
 ‘the Rules of Modesty, and Character.  
 ‘And that Mirth at the expence of Virtue, is an Over-purchase, *Nimium enim  
 risus pretium est si probitatis impendio con-*  
*ſar.*

Thus we see how these great *Masters* qualify Diversion, and tie it up to *Proviſoes*, and Conditions. Indeed to make *Delight* the main business of *Comedy* is an unreasonable and dangerous Principle: It opens the way to all Licentiousness, and Confounds the distinction between Mirth, and Madness. For if Diversion is the *Chief End*, it must be had at any Price. No serviceable Expedient must be refused,

M

tho’

## Immorality Encouraged

tho' never so scandalous. And thus the worst Things are said, and the best abus'd; Religion is insulted, and the most serious Matters turn'd into Ridicule! As if the Blind side of an Audience ought to be caress'd, and their Folly and Atheism entertain'd in the first Place. Yes, if the Palate is pleas'd, no matter tho' the Body is Poyson'd! For can one die of an easier Disease than Diversion? But Raillery apart, certainly Mirth and Laughing without respect to the Cause, are not such supreme Satisfactions! A man has sometimes Pleasure in losing his Wits. Frenzy, and *Possession*, will shake the Lungs, and brighten the Face; and yet I suppose they are not much to be covered. However, now we know the Reason of the Profaneness, and Obscenity of the *Stage*, of their Hellish Cursing, and Swearing, and in short of their great Industry to make God, and Goodness Comtemptible: 'Tis all to Satisfie the Company, and make People Laugh! A most admirable justification! What can be more engaging to an *Audience*, then to see a *Poet* thus Atheistically brave? To see him charge up to the Canons Mouth, and defy the Vengeance of Heaven to serve them? Besides, there may be somewhat of Convenience in the Case. To fetch Diversion out of

In-

Innocence is no such easy matter. There's no succeeding it may be in this method, without Sweat, and Drudging. Clean Wit, inoffensive Humour, and handsom Contrivance, require Time, and Thought. And who would be at this Expence, when the Purchase is so cheap another way? 'Tis possible a *Poet* may not always have Sense enough by him for such an Occasion. And since we are upon supposals, it may be the *Audience* is not to be gain'd without straining a Point, and giving a Loose to Conscience: And when People are sick, are they not to be Humour'd? In fine, we must make them Laugh, right or wrong, for *Delight* is the *Chief end of Comedy*. *Delight*! He should have said *Debauchery*: That's the English of the Word, and the Consequence of the Practice. But the Original Design of *Comedy* was otherwise: And granting 'twas not so, what then? If the *Ends* of Things are naught, they must be mended. Mischief is the Chief end of Malice, would it be then a Blemish in Ill Nature to change Temper, and relent into Goodness? The Chief *End* of a Madman it may be is to Fire a House, must we not therefore bind him in his Bed? To conclude. If *Delight* without Restraint, or Distinction, without Conscience or Shame, is the Supreme

## Immorality Encouraged

pream Law of Comedy, 'twere well if we had less on't. Arbitrary Pleasure, is more dangerous than Arbitrary Power. Nothing is more Brutal than to be abandon'd to Appetite; And nothing more wretched than to serve in such a Design. The *Mock-Astrologer* to clear himself of this Imputation, is glad to give up his Principle at Last. *Least any Man should think* (says he) *that I write this to make Libertinism amiable, or that I cared not to debase the end, and Institution of Comedy.* (It seems then *Delight* is not the Chief end.) *I must farther declare that we make not Vicious Persons Happy, but only as Heaven makes Sinners so, &c.* If this will hold all's well. But *Heaven* does not forgive without Repentance, Let us see then what Satisfaction he requires from his *Wild-Blood*, and what Discipline he puts him under. Why, He helps him to his Mistress, he Marries him to a Lady of Birth and Fortune. And now do you think He has not made him an Example, and punish'd him to some Purpose! These are frightful Severities! Who would be vicious when such Terrors hang over his Head? And does *Heaven* make Sinners happy upon these Conditions? Sure some People have a good Opinion of Vice, or a very ill one of Marriage, otherwise they would

would have Charged the Penance a little more. But I have nothing farther with the *Mock-Astrologer*.

And now for the Conclusion of a *Chapter*, I shall give some Instances of the *Manners* of the *Stage*, and that with respect to Poetry, and Ceremony. *Manners* in the Language of Poetry, is a Propriety of actions, and Persons. To succeed in this business, there must always be a regard had to Age, Sex, and Condition: And nothing put into the Mouths of Persons which disagrees with any of these Circumstances. 'Tis not enough to say a witty Thing, unless it be spoken by a likely Person, and upon a proper occasion. But my Design will lead me to this Subject afterwards, and therefore I shall say no more of it at present, but proceed to apply the Remark.

One Instance of Impropriety in *Manners* both Poetical and Moral, is their making Women, and Women of Quality talk Smuttily. This I have proved upon them already, and could cite many more places to the same purpose were it necessary.

But I shall go on, and give the Reader some other examples of Decency, Judgment, and Probability. *Don Sebastian* will help us in some measure. Here

p. 85.

the *Musty* makes a foolish Speech to the Rabble, and jests upon his own Religion. He tells them, *tho' your Tyrant is a Lawful Emperour, yet your Lawful Emperour is but a Tyrant, — That your Emperour is a Tyrant is most Manifest, for you were born to be Turks, but he has play'd the Turk with you.* And now is not this Man fit to Manage the *Alcoran*, and to be set up for an Oracle of State? *Captain Tom* should have had this Speech by right: But the *Poet* had a farther Design, and any thing is good enough for a *Musty*.

p. 129.

*Sebastian* after all the violence of his Repentance, his grasping at self Murther, and resolutions for the *Cell*, is strangely pleased with the Remembrance of his *Incest*, and wishes the repetition of it: And *Almeida* out of her Princely Modesty, and singular Compunction, is of the same mind. This is somewhat surprising! *Oedipus* and *Jocasta* in *Sophocles* don't Repent at this rate. No: The horror of the first-Discovery continues upon their Spirits: They never relapse into any fits of Intemperance, nor entertain themselves with a lewd Memory. This sort of Behaviour is not only more Instructive but more Natural too. It being very unlikely one should wish the repeating a Crime, when He was almost Distracted

at

at the thoughts on't, At the thoughts on't,  
 tho' 'twas committed under all the Cir-  
 cumstances of excuse. Now when Igno-  
 rance and meer Mistake are so very dis-  
 quieting, 'tis very strange if a Man should  
 plague his Mind with the aggravations of  
 Knowledge; To carry Aversion, and De-  
 sire, in their full strength upon the same  
 Object; To fly and pursue with so much  
 eagerness, is somewhat unusual. p. 32.

If we step to the *Spanish Fryar* He will  
 afford us a Flight worth the observing.  
 'Tis part of the Addresses of *Torrismond*  
 to *Leonora*.

*You are so Beautiful*  
*So wondrous Fair you justify Rebellion;*  
*As if that faultless Face could make no Sin,*  
*But Heaven by looking on it must forgive.*

These are strange Complements! *Tor-  
 rismond* calls his Queen Rebel to her head,  
 when he was both her General and her  
 Lover. This is powerful Rhetorick to  
 Court a Queen with! Enough one would  
 think to have made the Affair desperate.  
 But he has a Remedy at hand. The  
*Poet's Nostrum* of Profaneness cures all.  
 He does as good as tell Her, she may Sin  
 as much as she has a mind to. Her Face  
 is a Protection to her Conscience. For

# Immortality Encouraged

Heaven is under a necessity to forgive a Handsom Woman. To say all this ought to be pass'd over in *Torrifmond* on the score of his Passion, is to make the Excuse more scandalous than the Fault; if possible. Such Raptures are fit only for *Bedlam*, or a place which I shan't name. *Love Triumphant* will furnish another Rant not altogether inconsiderable. Here *Celadea* a Maiden Lady when she was afraid her Spark would be married to another, calls out presently for a *Chaos*. She is for pulling the World about her Ears, tumbling all the Elements together, and expostulates with Heaven for making Human Nature otherwise than it should have been.

P. 52.

*Great Nature break thy chain that links to-  
gether*

*The Fabrick of this Globe, and make a Chaos,  
Like that within my Soul. —*

Now to my fancy, if she had call'd for a *Chair* instead of a *Chaos*, trip'd off, and kept her folly to her self, the Woman had been much wiser. And since we have shown our Skill in vaulting on the High-Ropes, a little *Tumbling* on the *Stage*, may not do amiss for variety.

Spanish  
Fry. r. p.  
36.

Now then for a jest or two. *Don Ga-  
mez* shall begin; And here he'll give us

a



a Gingle upon the double meaning of a word.

*I think, says Dominick the Fryar, it was my good Angel that sent me hither so opportunely. Gomez suspects him brib'd for no creditable business and answers.*

*Gom. Ay, whose good Angels sent you hither, that you know best Father.*

These Spaniards will entertain us with more of this fine Raillery. Colonel *Sancho* in *Love Triumphant* has a great stroak at it. He says his Bride *Dalinda* is no more *Dalinda*, but *Dalilah* the *Philistine*. p 70.

This Colonel as great a Soldier as he is, is quite puzzled at a *Herald*. He thinks they call him *Herod*, or some such Jewish Name. Here you have a good Officer, p 61. spoil'd for a miserable jest. And yet after all, this *Sancho* tho' he can't pronounce *Herald*, knows what 'tis to be *Laconick*, which is somewhat more out of his way.

*Thraso* in *Terence* was a man of the same Eunuch. size in Sense, but for all that he does not quibble. *Albanaet* Captain of the Guards, King Arth. p. 2. is much about as witty as *Sancho*. It

seems *Emmeline* Heiress to the Duke of *Cornwal* was Blind. *Albanaet* takes the rise of his Thought from hence; And observes that as Blind as she is, *Coswald* would have no blind Bargain of her. *Car-Love Tri.* um. p. 26. *los* tells *Sancho* he is sure of his Mistress, and

## Immorality Encouraged

and has no more to do but to take out a License.

Sancho replies, *indeed I have her License for it.* Carlos is somewhat angry at this Gingle, and cries, *what quibbling too in your Prosperity?* Adversity it seems is the only time for *punning*. Truly I think so too. For 'tis a sign a Man is much Distress'd when he flies to such an Expedient. However, Carlos needed not to have been so touchy: For he can stoop as low himself upon occasion. We must know then that Sancho had made Himself a Hunch'd-Back, to counterfeit the Conde Alonzo. The two Colonels being in the same Disguise, were just upon the edg of a Quarrel. After some Preliminaries in Railing, Sancho cries, *Don't provoke me; I am mischievously bent.*

Carlos replies, *Nay you are Bent enough in Conscience, but I have a Bent Fist for Boxing.* Here you have a brace of Quibbles started in a Line and a half. And which is worst of all, they come from Carlos, from a Character of Sense; and therefore the Poet, not the Soldier, must answer for them.

I shall now give the Reader a few Instances of the Courtship of the Stage, and how decently they treat the Women, and Quality of both Sexes. The Women who

are

are secured from Affronts by Custom, and have a Privilege for Respect, are sometimes but roughly saluted by these Men of Address. And to bar the Defence, this Coarseness does not alwaies come from Clowns, and Women-haters; but from *Persons* of Figure, neither singular, nor ill Bred. And which is still worse, The Satir falls on blindly without Distinction, and strikes at the whole Sex.

Enter Raymond a Noble-man in the *Spanish Fryar*.<sup>p. 47.</sup>

*O Vertue! Vertue! What art thou become?  
That men should leave thee for that Toy a woman,  
Made from the dross and refuse of a Man;  
Heaven took him sleeping when he made her too,  
Had Man been waking he had ne're consented.*

I did not know before that a Man's Dross lay in his *Ribs*; I believe sometimes it lies higher. But the Philosophy, the Religion, and the Ceremony of these Lines, are too tender to be touched. *Creon* <sup>*Oedip. l. 3.*</sup> a Prince in *Oedipus*, Rails in General at the Sex, and at the same time is violently in Love with *Euridice*. This upon the matter, is just as natural, as 'tis Civil. If any one would understand what the Curse of all tender hearted Women is, *Belmour* will inform him. What is it then?  
'Tis

Old Batch.

P. 41.

'Tis the Pox. If this be true, the Women had need lay in a stock of ill Nature betimes. It seems 'tis their only preservative. It guards their Virtue, and their Health, and is all they have to trust to. *Sharper* another Man of Sense in this Play, talks much at the same rate. *Belinda* would know of him *where he got that excellent Talent of Railing?*

P. 35.

*Sharp.* Madam the Talent was Born with me—I confess I have taken care to improve it to qualifie me for the Society of Ladies. *Horner*, a Topping Character in the Country Wife, is advised to avoid Women, and hate them as they do him. He Answers.

P. 33.

Don Sebast

P. 5.

*Because I do hate them, and would hate them yet more, I'll frequent e'm; you may see by Marriage, nothing makes a Man hate a Woman more than her Constant Conversation.* There is still something more Coarse upon the Sex spoken by *Dorax*, but it is a privileged Expression; and as such I must leave it. The Relapse mends the Contrivance of the Satir, refines upon the manner, and to make the Discourse the more probable, obliges the Ladies to abuse themselves. And because I should be loath to tire the Reader, *Berinthia* shall close the Argument. This Lady having undertook

took the Employment of a *Procurefs*, makes this remark upon it to her self.

Berinth. *So here is fine work ! But there was no avoiding it. — Besides, I begin to Fancy there may be as much Pleasure in carrying on another Bodies Intrigue, as ones own. This is at least certain, It exercises almost all the Entertaining Faculties of a Woman. For there is Employment for Hypocrisie, Invention, Deceit, Flattery, Mischief, and Lying.*

Let us now see what Quarter the Stage gives to *Quality*. And here we shall find them extreamly free, and familiar. They dress up the *Lords* in Nick-Names, and expose them in *Characters* of contempt. *Lord Froth* is explain'd a *Solemn Coxcomb* ; *Lord Rake*, and *Lord Foplington* give you their Talent in their Title. *Lord Plausable* in the *Plain Dealer* Acts a ridiculous Part, but is with all very civil. He tells *Manly* he never attempted to abuse any Person. The other answers; *What P. 4. you were afraid?* *Manly* goes on and declares He would call a *Rascal* by no other Title, tho' his Father had left him a *Dukes*. That is, he would call a *Duke* a *Rascal*. *P. 2.* This I confess is very much *Plain Dealing*. Such freedoms would appear but odly in Life, especially without provocation. I must own the *Poet* to be an Author of good

Double Dealer.

Person.

Dram.

Relaps.

Prouk'd.

Wife.

## Immorality Encouraged

good Sense; But under favour, these jests, if we may call them so, are somewhat high season'd, the Humour seems overstrain'd, and the *Character* push'd too far. To proceed. *Mustapha* was selling *Don*

*Don Sebast.* *Alvarez* for a Slave. The Merchant asks  
p. 16.

*what Virtues he has. Mustapha* replies *Virtues* quoth ah! He is of a great Family and Rich, what other *Virtues* wouldst thou have in a Nobleman? *Don Carlos* in Love Triumphant stands for a Gentleman, and a Man of Sense, and out-throws *Mustapha* a Bar's Length. He tells us *Nature* has given *Sancho* an empty Noddle, but

p. 27. *Fortune* in revenge has fill'd his Pockets: just a Lords Estate in Land and Wit. This is a handsom Complement to the Nobility! And my Lord *Salisbury* had no doubt of it a good Bargain of the *Dedication*.

*Don Quix.*  
part. 2.

p. 37.

*Teresa's* general description of a Countess is considerable in its Kind: But only 'tis in no Condition to appear. In the *Relapse*, *Sir Tumbelly* who had Mistaken Young *Fashion* for Lord *Foplington*, was afterwards undeceiv'd; and before the surprise was quite over, puts the Question, is it then possible that this should be the true Lord *Foplington* at last? The Nobleman removes the scruple with great Civility and Discretion! Lord *Fopl.* Why what do you see in his Face to make you doubt of it?

it? Sir without presuming to have an extraordinary Opinion of my Figure, give me leave to tell you, if you had seen as many Lords as I have done, you would not think it Impossible a Person of a worse Taille than mine might be a Modern Man of Quality. *Relasse.* P. 84.

I'm sorry to hear Modern Quality degenerates so much. But by the way, these Liberties are altogether new. They are unpractis'd by the Latin Comedians, and by the English too till very lately, as the Plain Dealer observes. And as for Moliere in France, he pretends to fly his Satir no higher than a Marquis. P. 24.

L' Ombre  
de Moliere

And has our Stage a particular Privilege? Is their Charter enlarg'd, and are they on the same Foot of Freedom with the Slaves in the Saturnalia? Must all men be handled alike? Must their Roughness be needs play'd upon Title? And can't they lash the Vice without pointing upon the Quality? If as Mr. Dryden rightly defines it, a Play ought to be a just Image of Humane Nature; *Essay Dram* P. 3.  
Why are not the Decencies of Life, and the Respects of Conversation observ'd? Why must the Customes of Countries be Cross'd upon, and the Regards of Honor overlook'd? What necessity is there to kick the Coronets about the Stage, and to make a Man a Lord, only in order to make

## Immorality Encouraged

make him a Coxcomb. I hope the *Poets* don't intend to revive the old Project of Levelling, and *Vote* down the House of *Peers*. In earnest, the *Play-house* is an admirable School of Behaviour! This is their way of managing Ceremony, distinguishing Degree, and entertaining the *Boxes*! But I shall leave them at present to the enjoyment of their Talent, and proceed to another Argument.

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## CHAP.

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## CHAP. V.

*Remarks upon Amphytrion, King Arthur,  
Don Quixote, and the Relapse.*

## SECTION I.

THE following *Plays*, excepting the Last, will fall under the same Heads of Commendation with the Former. However, since the *Poets* have here been prodigal in their Expence, and dress'd themselves with more Curiosity then ordinary, they deserve a proportionable Regard. So much Finery must not be Crowded. I shall therefore make Elbow-Room for their Figure, and allow them the Compass of a distinct *Chapter*.

To begin with *Amphytrion*. In this Play Mr. *Dryden* represents *Jupiter* with the Attributes of the supream Being: He furnishes him with Omnipotence, makes him the Creator of Nature, and the Arbiter of Fate, puts all the Functions of Providence in his Hand, and describes him with the Majesty of the true God. And when he has put Him in this glorious

*Amphit.*

p. 1, 2,

3, 8, 9.

N

Equi-

p. 8. 17.

Equipage, he brings him out for Diversi-  
on. He makes him express himself in  
the most intemperate Raptures: He is  
willing to *Renounce* his *Heaven* for his  
Brutality, and employ a whole *Eternity* in  
Lewdness. He draws his Debauch at its  
full Length, with all the Art, and Height-  
ings, and Foulness of Idea imaginable.  
This *Jupiter* is not contented with his suc-  
cess against *Amphitrion*, unless he brings  
*Alomena* into the Confederacy, and makes  
her a Party *ex post Facto*. He would not  
have her think of her *Husband*, but her  
*Lover*, that is, her *Whoremaster*. 'Tis not  
the success, but the manner of gaining it  
which is all in all. 'Tis the Vice which  
is the charming Circumstance. Innocence  
and Regularity, are dangerous Compani-  
ons; They spoil Satisfaction, and make  
every Thing insipid! Unless People take  
care to discharge their Virtue, and clear  
off their Conscience, their Senses will va-  
nish immediately! For *Jupiter*, says he,  
would owe nothing to a Name so dull as  
*Husband*. And in the next Page.

p. 12.

p. 9.

*That very name of Wife and Marriage,  
Is poison to the dearest sweets of Love.*

I would give the Reader some more  
of these fine Sentences, but that they are

too much out of Order to appear. The truth is, Our *Stage-Poets* seem to fence against Censure by the excess of Lewdness; And to make the overgrown size of a Crime, a Ground for Impunity. As if a Malefactor should project his Escape by appearing to scandalous for publick Tryal. However, This is their Armour of Proof, this is the Strength they retreat to. They are fortified in Smut, and almost impregnable in Stench, so that where they deserve most, there's no coming at them. To proceed. I desire to know what Authority Mr. *Dryden* has for this extraordinary Representation? His Original *Plautus*, is no President. Indeed *Plautus* is the only bold Heathen that ever made *Jupiter* tread the Stage. But then he stops far short of the Liberties of the *English Amphytrion*. *Jupiter* at Rome, and London, have the same unaccountable Design; but the Methods of pursuit are very different. The First, does not solicit in scandalous Language, nor flourish upon his Lewdness, nor endeavours to set it up for the Fashion. *Plautus* had some regard to the Height of the Character, and the Opinion of his Country, and the Restraints of Modesty. The Sallies of *Aristophanes* do not come up to the case; And if they did, I have cut off the Succours from that

## Remarks upon

Quarter already. *Terence's Charea* is the next bold Man: However, here the Fable of *Jupiter* and *Danae* are just glanced at, and the Expression is clean; and He that tells the Story, a Young Libertine. These are all circumstances of extenuation, and give quite another Complexion to the Thing. As for the *Greek Tragedians* and *Seneca*, there's no Prescription can be drawn from them. They mention *Jupiter* in Terms of Magnificence and Respect, and make his Actions, and his Nature of a piece. But it may be the Celebrated *Homer*, and *Virgil* may give Mr. *Dryden* some Countenance. Not at all. *Virgil's Jupiter* is alwaies great, and solemn, and keeps up the port of a Deity. 'Tis true, *Homer* does not guard the Idea with that exactness, but then He never sinks the Character into Obscenity. The most exceptionable passage is that where *Jupiter* relates his Love Adventures to *Juno*. Here this pretended Deity is charm'd with *Venus's* Girdle, is in the height of his Courtship, and under the Ascendant of his Passion. This 'tis confess'd was a slippery Place, and yet the Poet makes a shift to keep his Feet. His *Jupiter* is Little, but not nauseous; The Story, tho' improper, will bear the telling, and look Conventional in the Face. However; These Freedoms

doms of *Homer* were counted intolerable: I shall not insist on the Censures of *Justin Martyr*, or *Clemens Alexandrinus*: Even the Heathen could not endure them. The Poets are lashed by *Plato* upon this Score; For planting Vice in Heaven, and making their Gods infectious; If Mr. *Dryden* answers that *Jupiter* can do us no Harm. He is known to be an Idol of Lewd Memory, and therefore his Example can have no Force: Under Favour this is a mistake: For won't Pitch daub when a dirty Hand throws it; or can't a Toad spit Poyson because she's ugly? Ribaldry is dangerous under any Circumstances of Representation. And as *Menander* and *St. Paul* express it, *Evil Communications corrupt good Manners*. I mention them both, because if the *Apostle* should be disliked the *Comedian* may pass. But after all, Mr. *Dryden* has not so much as a Heathen President for his Singularities. What then made him fall into them? Was it the Decency of the Thing, and the Propriety of Character, and Behaviour? By no means. For as I have observ'd before, Nature and Operations, ought to be proportion'd, and Behaviour suited to the Dignity of Being. To draw a Monkey in Royal Robes, and a Prince in *Antick*, would be Farce upon

*Euseb. praepar. Evang.*

## Remarks upon

Colours, entertain like a Monster, and please only upon the score of Deformity. Why then does Mr. Dryden cross upon Nature and Authority, and go off as he Confesses, from the Plan of *Plautus*, and *Moliere*? Tho' by the way, the English *Amphytrion* has borrow'd most of the Libertine Thoughts of *Moliere*, and improv'd them. But to the former question. Why must the beaten Road be left? He tells us, *That the difference of our Stage from the Roman and the French did so require it.* That is, our Stage must be much more Licentious. For you are to observe that Mr. Dryden, and his Fraternity, have help'd to debauch the Town, and Poyson their Pleasures to an unusal Degree: And therefore the Diet must be dress'd to the Palate of the Company. And since they are made *Scepticks*, they must be entertain'd as such. That the English *Amphytrion* was contriv'd with this View is too plain to be better interpreted. To what purpose else does *Jupiter* appear in the shape of *Jehovah*? Why are the incommunicable *Attributes* burlesqu'd, and Omnipotence applied to Acts of Infamy? To what end can such Horrible stuff as this serve, unless to expose the Notion, and extinguish the Belief of a Deity? The Perfections of God, are Himself. To  
ridicule

Ep. Ded.

ridicule his Attributes and his Being, are but two words for the same Thing. These Attributes are bestow'd on *Jupiter* with great Prodigality, and afterwards execrably outrag'd. The Case being thus, the Cover of an Idol, is too thin a pretence to Screen the Blasphemy. Nothing but Mr. Dryden's *Absalom* and *Achitophel* can out-do This. Here I confess the Motion of his Pen is bolder, and the Strokes more Black'd. Here we have Blasphemy on the top of the Letter, without any trouble of Inference, or Construction. This Poem runs all upon Scripture Names, Upon Suppositions of the true Religion, and the right Object of Worship. Here Profaneness is shut out from Defence, and lies open without Colour or Evasion. Here are no Pagan Divinities in the Scheme, so that all the Atheistick Raillery must point upon the true God. In the beginning we are told that *Absalom* was *David's* Natural Son: So then there's a blot in his *Scutcheon*, and a Blemish upon his Birth. The Poet will make admirable use of this remark presently! This *Absalom* it seems was very extraordinary in his Person and Performances. Mr. Dryden does not certainly know how this came about, and therefore enquires of himself in the first place,

N 4

Whe-

*Whether inspired with a diviner Lust,  
p. 1. His Father got him——*

This is down right Defiance of the Living God! Here you have the very Essence and Spirit of Blasphemy, and the Holy Ghost brought in upon the most hideous Occasion. I question whether the Torments and Despair of the Damn'd, dare venture at such Flights as these. They are beyond Description, I Pray God they may not be beyond Pardon too. I can't forbear saying, that the next bad Thing to the writing these Impieties, is to Suffer them. To return to *Amphytrion*. *Phabus* and *Mercury* have *Manners* assign'd very disagreeable to their Condition. The later abating Propriety of Language, talks more like a *Water-man* than a Deity. They rail against the Gods, and call *Mars* and *Vulcan* the two Fools of Heaven. *Mercury* is pert upon his Father *Jupiter*, makes jests upon his Pleasures, and his Greatness, and is horribly smutty and profane. And all this Misbehaviour comes from him in his own Shape, and in the sublimity of his Character. Had He run Riot in the Disguise of *Sofia*, the Discourse and the Person had been better adjusted, and the Extravagance more Pardonable.

But

p. 3. 16.  
Ec.



But here the Decorum is quite lost. To see the *Immortals* play such Gambols, and the biggest Beings do the least Actions, is strangely unnatural. An Emperour in the Grimaces of an Ape, or the Diversions of a Kitten, would not be half so ridiculous. Now as Monsieur *Rapin* observes, without Decorum there can be no *probability*, nor without Probability any true Beauty. Nature must be minded, otherwise Things will look forced, tawdry, and chimerical. Mr. *Dryden* discourages very handsomly on this occasion in his *Preface* to *Albion* and *Albanus*. He<sup>P. 1.</sup> informs us, *That Wit has been truly defin'd a propriety of Words and Thoughts. — That Propriety of Thought is that Fancy which arises naturally from the Subject.* Why then without doubt, the Quality, of Characters should be taken care of, and great Persons appear like themselves. Yes, yes, all this is granted by implication, and Mr. *Dryden* comes still nearer to the present case. He tells us, that *Propriety is to be observed, even in Machines; And that the Gods are all to manage their Peculiar Provinces.* He instances in some of their respective Employments; but I don't find that any of them were to talk Lewdly. No. He plainly supposes the contrary. For as he goes on, *If they were to speak upon*  
the

## Remarks upon

*the Stage it would follow of necessity, that the Expressions should be Lofty, Figurative, and Majestical. It seems then their Behaviour should be agreeable to their Greatness. Why then are not these Rules observ'd in the Machines of Amphytrion? And as I take it, Obscenity has not the Air of Majesty, nor any Alliance with the Sublime. And as for the Figurative Part, 'tis generally of the same Cut with the Lofty: The smut shines clear, and strong, through the Metaphor, and is no better screen'd than the Sun by a Glas Window. To use Mercury thus ill, and make the God of Eloquence speak so unlike himself, is somewhat strange! But tho' the Antients knew nothing of it, there are Considerations above those of Decency. And when this happens, A Rule must rather be trespass'd on, than a Beauty left out. 'Tis Mr. Dryden's opinion in his Cleomenes, where he breaks the Unity of Time, to describe the Beauty of a Famine. Now Beauty is an arbitrary Advantage, and depends upon Custom and Fancy. With some People the Blackest Complexions are the handsomest, 'Tis to these African Criticks that Mr. Dryden seems to make his Appeal. And without doubt he bespeaks their Favour, and strikes their Imagination luckily enough. For to lodge Divinity and Scandal together; To make*

the

*Pres.*

the Gods throw *Stars*, like *Snow-balls* at one another, but especially to Court in Smut, and rally in Blasphemy, is most admirably entertaining! This is much better than all the Niceties of *Decorum*. 'Tis handsomely contriv'd to slur the Notion of a Superiour Nature, to disarm the Terrors of Religion, and make the Court Above as Romantick as that of the *Fairies*. A Libertine when his Conscience is thus reliev'd, and Atheism sits easie upon his Spirits, can't help being greatful upon the Occasion. Meer Interest will oblige him to cry up the Performance, and solicit for the *Poet's* Reputation! Before I take leave of these *Machines*, it may not be amiss to enquire why the Gods are brought into the *Spiritual Court*. Now I suppose the Creditableness of the Business, and the *Poets* Kindness to those *Places*, are the principal Reasons of their coming. However, He might have a farther Design in his Head, and that is, to bring *Thebes* to London, and to show the Antiquity of *Doctors Commons*. For if you will believe *Mercury*, this Conference between him and *Phaebus* washeld three thousand years ago. Thus *Shakespear* makes *Hector* talk about *Aristotle's* Philosophy, and calls Sr. *John Old Castle*, *Protestant*. I had not mention'd this Discovery in Chronology, but

19.  
*Troil. and*  
*Cressid.*

*The Hist.*  
*of Sr. John*  
*Old-Castle.*

## Remarks upon

but that Mr. Dryden falls upon Ben Johnson, for making Cataline give Fire at the Face of a Cloud, before Guns were invented.

By the Pattern of these pretended Deities, we may guess what sort of Mortals we are likely to meet with. Neither are we mistaken. For Phadra is bad enough in all Conscience, but Bromia is a meer Original. Indeed when Mr. Dryden makes Jupiter, and Jupiter makes the Women, little less can be expected. So much for *Amphitruon*.

King Arthur.

I shall pass on to *King Arthur* for a word or two. Now here is a strange jumble and Hotch potch of Matters, if you mind it. Here we have *Genii*, and *Angels*, *Cupids*, *Syrens*, and *Devils*; *Venus* and *St. George*, *Pan* and the *Parson*, the Hell of Heathenism, and the Hell of Revelation; A fit of Smut, and then a Jest about Original Sin. And why are Truth and Fiction, Heathenism and Christianity, the most Serious and the most Trifling Things blended together, and thrown into one Form of Diversion? Why is all this done unless it be to ridicule the whole, and make one as incredible as the other? His *Airy* and *Earthy Spirits* Discourse of the first state of Devils, of their *Cheif*, of their Revolt, their Punishment, and Impostures.

postures. This Mr. Dryden very Religiously calls a *Fairy way of Writing*, which depends only on the Force of Imagination. Ep. Ded.  
 What then is the Fall of the Angels a Romance? Has it no basis of Truth, nothing to support it, but strength of Fancy and Poetick Invention? After He had mention'd Hell, Devils, &c. And given us a sort of Bible description of these formidable Things; I say after he had formed his Poem in this manner, I am surprized to here him call it a *Fairy kind of Writing*. Is the History of *Tophet* no better prov'd than that of *Styx*? Is the Lake of *Brimstone* and that of *Phlegeton* alike dreadful? And have we as much Reason to believe the Torments of *Titius* and *Prometheus*, as those of the Devils and Damn'd? These are lamentable Consequences! And yet I can't well see how the Poet can avoid them. But setting aside this miserable Gloss in the *Dedication* the Representation• it self is scandalously irreligious. To droll upon the Vengeance of Heaven, and the Miseries of the Damn'd, is a sad Instance of Christianity! Those that bring Devils upon the Stage, can hardly believe them any where else. Besides, the Effects of such an Entertainment must needs be admirable! To see Hell thus play'd with is a mighty Refreshment to a lewd Conscience,

## Remarks upon

science, and a byass'd Understanding. It heartens the Young Libertine, and confirms the well-wishers to Atheism, and makes Vice bold, and enterprizing. Such Diversions serve to dispel the Gloom, and guild the Horrors of the *Shades below*, and are a sort of Ensurance against Damnation. One would think these *Poets* went upon absolute Certainty, and could demonstrate a Scheme of Infidelity. If they could, They had much better keep the Secret. The divulging it tends only to debauch Mankind, and shake the Securities of Civil Life. However, if they have been in the other World and find it empty, and uninhabited, and are acquainted with all the Powers, and Places, in Being; If they can show the Impostures of Religion, and the Contradictions of Common Belief, they have something to say for themselves. Have they then infallible Proof and Mathematick Evidence for these Discoveries? No Man had ever the Confidence to say This. And if He should, he would be but laughed at for his Folly. No Conclusions can exceed the Evidence of their Principles; you may as well build a Castle in the Air, as raise a Demonstration upon a Bottom of Uncertainty. And is any Man so vain as to pretend to know the Extent of Nature, and the Stretch of Possibility; and

and the Force of the Powers Invisible? So that notwithstanding the Boldness of this *Opera*, there may be such a Place as Hell; And if so, a Discourse about Devils, will be no *Fairy way of Writing*. For a *Fairy way of Writing*, is nothing but a *History of Fiction*; A subject of Imaginary Beings; such as never had any existence in Time, or Nature. And if as Monsieur *Rapin* observes, *Poetry* requires a mixture of Truth and *Fable*; Mr. *Dryden* may make his advantage, for his *Play* is much better founded on Reality than He was aware of.

It may not be improper to consider in a word or two, what a frightful Idea the *Holy Scriptures* give us of Hell. 'Tis describ'd by all the Circumstance of Terror, by every Thing dreadful to Sense, and amazing to Thought. The Place, the Company, the Duration, are all Considerations of Astonishment. And why has God given us this solemn warning? Is it not to awaken our Fears, and guard our Happiness; To restrain the Disorders of Appetite, and to keep us within Reason, and Duty? And as for the *Apostate Angels*, the *Scriptures* inform us of their lost Condition, of their Malice and Power, of their active Industry and Experience; and all these Qualities Correspondent

## Remarks upon

dent to the Bulk of their Nature, the Antiquity of their Being, and the Misery of their State. In short, They are painted in all the formidable Appearances imaginable, to alarm our Caution, and put us upon the utmost Defence.

Let us see now how Mr. *Dryden* represents these unhappy Spirits, and their Place of Abode. Why very entertainingly! Those that have a true Taste for Atheism were never better regaled. One would think by this *Play* the Devils were meer Marmo's and Bugbears, fit only to fright Children and Fools. They rally upon Hell and Damnation, with a great deal of Air and Pleasantry; and appear like *Robin-Good-fellow*, only to make the Company laugh. *Philidel*: Is call'd a *Puling Sprite*. And why so? For this pious reason, because

*He trembles at the yawning Gulph of Hell,  
Nor dares approach the Flames lest he should  
Singe*

p. 6.

*His gaudy silken Wings.  
He sighs when he should plunge a Soul in  
Sulphur,  
As with Compassion touch'd of Foolish Man.*

The answer is, *What a half Devil's he.*

You



You see how admirably it runs all upon the Christian Scheme! Sometimes they are *Half-Devils*, and sometimes *Hopeful-Devils*, and what you please to make sport with. *Grimbald* is afraid of being *whooped through Hell at his return*, for miscarrying in his Business. It seems there is great Leisure for Diversion! There's *Whooping* in Hell, instead of *Weeping* and *Wailing*! One would fancy Mr. *Dryden* had Day-light and Company, when these lines were written. I know his Courage is extraordinary; but sure such Thoughts could never bear up against Solitude and a Candle!

And now since he has diverted himself with the *Terrors of Christianity*, I don't wonder he should treat those that Preach them with so much Civility! Enter Poet in the Habit of a *Peasant*.

*We ha cheated the Parson we'll Cheat him again,*  
*For why should a Blockhead have one in ten?*  
*For prating so long like a Booklearned Sor,*  
*Till Pudding and Dumpling burn to pot.*

These are fine comprehensive stroaks! Here you have the *Iliads* in a Nutshell! Two or three courtly words take in the whole Clergy: And what is wanting in  
 O Wit.

## Remarks upon

Wit, is made up in abuse, and that's as well. This is an admirable *Harvest-Catch*, and the poor Tith-stealers stand highly indebted. They might have been tired with Cheating in *Prose*, had they not been thus seasonably reliev'd in Doggrel: But now there is Musick in playing the Knave. A Countryman now may fill his Barn, and humour his ill Manners, and sing his Conscience asleep, and all under one. I don't question but these *four Lines* steal many a Pound in the Year. Whether the *Muse* stands indictable or not, the Law must determine. But after all, I must say the Design is notably laid. For Place and Person, for Relish and Convenience, nothing could have been better. The Method is very short, clear, and Practicable. 'Tis a fine portable Infection, and costs no more Carriage than the Plague.

Well! the Clergy must be contorted: It might possibly have been worse for them if they had been in his favour: For he has sometimes a very unlucky way of showing his Kindness. He commends the *Earl of Leicester for considering the Friend, more than the Cause*; that is, for his Partiality; The Marquess of *Halifax for quitting the Helm, at the approach of a Storm*; As if Pilots were made only for fair Weather,

Ep. Ded.  
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ther. 'Tis Presum'd these Noble Persons are unconcern'd in this Character. However the Poet has shown his skill in Panegyrick, and 'tis only for that I mention it. He commends *Atticus* for his Trimming, <sup>Sebast.</sup> and *Tully* for his Cowardise, and speaks <sup>K. Arth.</sup> meanly of the Bravery of *Cato*. Afterwards he professes his Zeal for the Publick welfare, and is pleas'd to see the Nation so well secur'd from Foreign Attempts, &c. <sup>Ibid.</sup> However he is in some pain about the coming of the *Gauls*: 'Tis possible for fear they should invade the *Muses*, and carry the *Opera's* into Captivity, and deprive us of the *Ornaments of Peace*.

And now he has serv'd his Friends, he comes in the last place like a modest Man, to commend Himself. He tells us there were a great many *Beauties* in the Original Draught of this *Play*. But it seems Time has since tarnish'd their Complexion, And he gives *Heroick* Reasons for their not appearing. To speak Truth, (all Politicks apart,) there are strange Flights of Honour, and Consistencies of Pretention in this Dedication! But I shall forbear the Blazon of the *Atchievement*, for fear I should commend as unluckily as Himself.

## SECT. II.

*Remarks upon Don Quixot, &c.*

**M**R. *Durfey* being somewhat particular in his Genius and Civilities, I shall consider him in a word or two by himself. This Poet writes from the *Romance* of an ingenious Author : By this means his Sense, and *Characters* are cut out to his Hand. He has wisely planted himself upon the shoulders of a *Giant* ; but whether his Discoveries answer the advantage of his standing, the Reader must judge.

What I have to object against Mr. *Durfey* shall most of it be ranged under these three Heads.

I. *His Profaneness with respect to Religion and the Holy Scriptures.*

II. *His Abuse of the Clergy.*

III. *His want of Modesty and Regard to the Audience.*

I. *His Profaneness. &c.*

And here my first Instance shall be in a bold *Song* against Providence.

*Pro*

*Providence that formed the Fair  
In such a charming Skin,  
Their Outside made his only care,  
And never look'd within.*

Part 1st.  
p. 20.

Here the Poet tells you Providence makes Mankind by halves, huddles up the Soul, and takes the least care of the better Moyety. This is direct blaspheming the Creation, and a Satir upon God Almighty. His next advance is to droll upon the Resurrection.

*Sleep and indulge thy self with Rest.  
Nor dream thou e'er shalt rise again.*

p. 20.

His Third Song makes a jest of the Fall, rails upon Adam and Eve, and burlesques the Conduct of God Almighty for not making Mankind over again.

*When the World first knew Creation,  
A Rogue was a Top-Profession,  
When there was no more in all Nature but* p. 37.

*Four,  
There were two of them in Transgression.*

*He that first to mend the matter,  
Made Laws to bind our Nature,  
Should have found away*

*To make Wills obey,  
And have Modell'd new the Creature.*

In this and the following page, the *Redemption* of the World is treated with the same respect with the *Creation*. The word *Redeemer*, which among Christians is appropriated to our Blessed Saviour, and like the Jewish Tetragrammaton peculiarly reserv'd to the Deity; This adorable Name (*Redeemer and Dear Redeemer*,) is applyed to the ridiculous Don Quixot. These Insolencies are too big for the Correction of a Pen, and therefore I shall leave them. After this horrible abuse of the Works, and Attributes of God, he goes on to make sport with his Vengeance. He makes the Torments of Hell a very Comical Entertainment: As if they were only Flames in Painting, and Terrors in Romance. The *Stygian Frogs* in *Aristophanes* are not represented with more Levity, and Drolling. That the Reader may see I do him no wrong, I shall quote the places, which is the main Reason why I have transcrib'd the rest of his Profaneness.

*Appear ye fat Fiends that in Limbo do groan,  
That were when in Flesh the same souls with  
his own.*

*You that always in Lucifers Kitchen reside,  
'Amongst Sea-coal and Kettles, and Grease  
newly try'd:*

*That pamper'd each day with a Garbidge of  
Souls,*

*Broil Rasbers of Fools for a Breakfast on  
Coals.*

In the Epilogue you have the History of Balaam's Ass exposed, and the Beast brought upon the Stage to laugh at the Miracle the better;

*And as 'tis said a parlous Ass once spoke,  
When Crab-tree Cudgel did his rage provoke.  
So if you are not civil,—I fear  
He'll speak again,—*

In the second Part the Devil is brought upon the Stage. He cries as he hopes to be Saved. And Sancho warrants him a <sup>P. 18.</sup> good Christian. Truly I think he may have more of Christianity in him than the Poet. For he trembles at that God, with whom the other makes Diversion.

I shall omit the mention of several Outrages of this Kind, besides his deep-mouth'd swearing, which is frequent, and pass on to the Second Head, which is His Abuse of the Clergy. And since Reveal'd Religion has been thus horribly treated,

## Remarks upon

'tis no Wonder if the *Ministers* of it have the same Usage.

And here we are likely to meet with some passages extraordinary enough. For to give Mr. *Durfey* his due, when he meddles with Church-men he lays about him like a Knight-Errant: Here his Wit and his Malice, are generally in extreams, tho' not of the same Kind. To begin. He makes the Curate *Perez* assist at the ridiculous Ceremony of *Don Quixot's* Knighting. Afterwards Squire *Sancho* confessing his mistake to *Quixot*, tells him, *Ah consider, dear Sir, no man is born wise*, Then I think the greater care should be taken He is not Bred a Fool. But how does he prove this Memorable Sentence? Because a *Bishop is no more than another man without Grace and Good Breeding*. I must needs say if the Poet had any share of either of these Qualities, he would be less bold with his Superiors; and not give his Clowns the Liberty to droll thus heavily upon a solemn Character. This *Sancho* Mr. *Durfey* takes care to inform us is a dry shrewd Country Fellow. The reason of this Character is for the strength of it somewhat surprizing. 'Tis because he blunders out Proverbs upon all Occasions, tho' never so far from the purpose. Now if blundering and talking nothing

Part. 1.

P. 13.

Person.

Dram.

to



to the purpose, is an argument of *Shrewdness*, some People's *Plays* are very *Shrewd Performances*. To proceed. *Sancho* complains of his being married because it hindered him from better offers. *Perez* the Curate is sorry for this Misfortune : For as I remember, says he, 'twas my luck to give *Teresa* and you the Blessing. To this *Sancho* replies. *A Plague on your Blessing ! I perceive I shall have reason to wish you hang'd for your Blessing—Good finisher of Fornication, good Conjunction Copulative.* p. 51.

For this Irreverence and Profaneness *Perez* threatens him with Excommunication. *Sancho* tells him, *I care not, I shall lose nothing by it but a nap in the Afternoon*. In his second Part *Jodolet* a Priest is call'd a *Holy Cormorant*, and made to dispatch half a Turkey, and a Bottle of *Malaga* for his Breakest. Here one Country Girl p. 3. chides another for her sawcyness. *D'ee* (says she) *make a Pimp of a Priest ?* *Sancho* interposes with his usual shrewdness : *A Pimp of a Priest is that such a Miracle ?* In the Second Scene the Poet Provides himself another Priest to abuse. p. 7. *Mannel* the Steward calls *Bernardo* the Chaplain *Mr. Cuff Cushion*, and tells him a *Whore is a Pulpit loves*.—In settling the Characters, *Mannel* is given out for a witty pleasant Fellow. And now you see he comes up to Expectation. To the Blind all Colours are

## Remarks upon

p. 10.

are alike, and Rudeness and Raillery are the same thing! Afterwards, *Bernardo* says *Grace* upon the *Stage*; and I suppose Prays to God to bless the Entertainment of the Devil. Before they rise from Table, the *Poet* contrives a Quarrel between *Don Quixot* and *Bernardo*. The Priest rails on the Knight, and calls him *Don Coxcomb*, &c. By this time you may imagine the Knight heartily Provok'd, ready to buckle on his *Basin*, and draw out for the Combat. Let us hear his Resentment.

p. 41.

*Don Quix.* Oh! thou old black Fox with a Firebrand in thy Tail, thou very Priest: Thou Kindler of all Mischeifs in all Nations. De'e hear Homily: Did not the Reverence I bear these Nobles—I would so thrum your Cassock you Church Vermin.

p. 47.

At last he bids *Bernardo* adieu in Language too Profane and Scandalous to relate. In the Fourth Act His Song calls the Clergy Black Cattle, and says no Body now minds what they say. I could alledge more of his Courtship to the Order, but, the Reader might possibly be tired, and therefore I shall proceed in the

part 1st.

p. 7. 8.

pt. 2d.

p. 57.

Third place, to his want of Modesty, and Regard to the Audience. As for *Smut Sancho* and *Teresa* talk it broad, and single sens'd, for almost a page together. *Mary the Buxom* has likewise her share

of this Accomplishment. The first Epilogue is Garnish'd with a Couplet of it; *Marcella* the Maiden Shepherdess raves in Raptures of Indecency; And sometimes you have it mixt up with Profaneness, to make the Composition the stronger. But this entertainment being no Novelty, I shall pass it over; And the rather because there are some other Rarities which are not to be met with elsewhere.

Here he diverts the Ladies with the Charming Rhetorick of *Snotty-Nose*, filthy Vermin in the Beard, Nitty Jerkin, Louse Snapper, and the Letter in the Chamber-pot; with an abusive description of a Countess, and a rude story of a certain Lady with some other varieties of this Kind, too coarse to be named. This is rare stuff for Ladies, and Quality! There is more of *Physick*, than *Comedy* in such Sentences as these. *Crocus Metallorum* will scarce turn the Stomack more effectually. 'Tis possible Mr. *Durfey* might design it for a Receipt; And being Conscious the Play was too dear, threw a Vomit into the Bargain. I wonder Mr. *Durfey* should have no more regard to the Boxes and Pit! That a Man who has studied the Scenes of Decency and Good Manners with so much Zeal, should practise with so little Address! Certainly indefatigable Diligence, Care

*Ibid.*

*Cave and pains*, was never more unfortunate! In his *third part*, *Buxome* swears faster, and is more scandalous, and impertinent, than in the other two. At these Liberties, and some in *Sancho*, the Ladies took Check. This Censure Mr. *Durfey* seems heartily sorry for. He is *extremely concern'd that the Ladies, that*

*Prof.* *Essential part of the Audience*, should think, his Performance *nauseous and undecent*, That is, he is very sorry they brought their Wits, or their Modesty along with them. However Mr. *Durfey* is not so Ceremonious as to submit: He is resolved to keep the Field against the Ladies; And endeavours to defend himself by saying, *I know no other way in Nature to do the Characters right, but to make a Romp speak like a Romp, and a clownish Boor blunder, &c.*

*Ibid.*

By his favour, all Imitations tho' never so well Counterfeited are not proper for the *Stage*. To Present Nature under every Appearance would be an odd undertaking. A Midnight Cart, or a *Dunghil* would be no ornamental Scene. Nastiness, and dirty Conversation are of the same kind. For *Words* are a Picture to the Ear, as Colours and *Surface* are to the Eye. Such Discourses are like dilating upon Ulcers, and Leprosies: The more

Na-

*Natural*, the worse ; for the Disgust always rises with the Life of the Description. Offensive Language like offensive Smells, does but make a Man's Senses a burthen, and affords him nothing but Loathing and Aversion. Beastliness in Behaviour, gives a disparaging Idea of Humane Nature, and almost makes us sorry we are of the same Kind. For these reasons 'tis a Maxim in Good Breeding never to shock the Senses, or Imagination. This Rule holds strongest before *Women*, and especially when they come to be entertain'd. The Diversion ought to be suited to the Audience ; For nothing pleases which is disproportion'd to Capacity, and Gust. The Rudenesses and broad Jests of Beggars, are just as acceptable to Ladies as their Rags, and Cleanliness. To treat Persons of Condition like the *Mob*, is to degrade their Birth, and affront their Breeding. It levels them with the lowest Education. For the size of a Man's Sense, and Improvment, is discovered by his Pleasures, as much as by any thing else.

But to remove from *Scenes of Decency*, to *Scenes of Wit*. And here *Mannel* and *Sancho*, two pleasant sharp Fellows, will divert us extreamly. *Mannel* in the Disguise of a Lady addresses the Dutchess in this manner.

*Person.  
Dram.*

manner. *Illustrious Beauty*—— *I must desire to know whether the most purifidiferous Don Quixote of the Manchissima, and his squireiferous Pancha, be in this Company or no.* This is the Ladies speech! Now comes *Sancho*. *Why look you Forsooth, without any more Flourishes, the Governour Panca is here, and Don Quixotissimo too; therefore most afflictedissimons Matronissima, speak what you willissimus, for we are all ready to be your Servitorissimus.*

pt. 2d.  
p. 31.

I dare not go on, for fear of overlaying the Reader. He may cloy himself at his Leisure. The Scene between the *Taylor* and *Gardiner*, lies much in the same Latitude of Understanding.

p. 51.

The Third Part presents a set of *Poppets*, which is a Thought good enough; for this Play is only fit to move upon *Wires*. 'Tis pity these little *Machines* appear'd no sooner, for then the Sense, and the *Actors* had been well adjusted. In explaining the *Persons*, He acquaints us that *Carasco* is a *Witty Man*. I can't tell what the Gentleman might be in other Places, but I'm satisfied he is a Fool in his *Play*. But some *Poets* are as great Judges of Wit, as they are an Instance; And have the Theory and the Practice just alike.

*Mr. Durfey's Epistles Dedicatory* are to the full as diverting as his *Comedies*. A little of them may not be amiss. In

In his first, He thus addresses the Dutchess of Ormond. 'Tis Madam from your Graces Prosperous Influence that I date my Good Fortune. To Date from time and Place, is vulgar and ordinary, and many a Letter has miscarried with it: But to do it from an Influence, is Astrological, and surprising, and agrees extreamly with the Hemisphere of the Play-house. These Flights one would easily imagine were the Poor Off-spring of Mr. Durfey's Brain, as he very judiciously phrases it. Pref. p. 1st.

One Paragraph in his Dedication to Mr. Montague is perfect Quixotism; One would almost think him enchanted. I'll give the Reader a Tast.

Had your Eyes shot the haughty Austerity upon me of a right Courtier, — your valued minutes had never been disturb'd with dilatory Trifles of this Nature, but my Heart on dull Consideration of your Merit, had supinely wish'd your prosperity at a Distance. I'm afraid the Poet was under some Apprehensions of the Temper he complains of. For to my thinking, there is a great deal of Supineness, and dull Consideration in these Periods. He tells his Patron his Smiles have embolden'd him. I confess I can't see how He could forbear smiling at such Entertainment. However Mr. Durfey takes Things by the best Handle, and is resolv'd to

## Remarks upon

to be happy in his Interpretation. But to be serious. Were I the Author, I would discharge my Muse unless she prov'd kinder. His way is rather to cultivate his Lungs, and Sing to other Peoples Sense: For to finish him in a word, he is *Vox & praterea nihil* I speak this only on Supposition that the rest of his Performances are like These. Which because I have not perused, I can judge of no farther than by the Rule of *ex pede Herculem*. I shall conclude with Monsieur Boileau's *Art of Poetry*, This citation may possibly be of some service to Mr. *Durfey*; For if not concern'd in the Application, he may at least be precaution'd by the Advice.

The Translation runs thus.

P. 53.

*I like an Author that Reforms the Age ;  
And keeps the right Decorum of the Stage :  
That always pleases by just Reasons Rule :  
But for a tedious Droll a Quibbling Fool,  
Who with low nauseous Baudry fills his Plays ;  
Let him be gone and on two Tressels raise  
Some Smithfield Stage, where he may act his  
Pranks.  
And make Jack-puddings speak to Mountebanks.*

SECT



### SECT. III.

#### *Remarks upon the Relapse.*

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Fashion a *Lewd, Prodigal, younger Brother*, is Reduced to extremity: Upon his arrival from his Travels, he meets with Coupler an, old *sharping Match-maker*; This Man puts him upon a project of cheating his Elder Brother Lord Foplington, of a rich Fortune. Young Fashion being refused a Summ of Money by his Brother, goes into Couplers Plot, bubbles Sir Tunbelly of his Daughter, and makes himself Master of a fair Estate.

From the Form and Constitution of the *Fable*, I observe

1<sup>st</sup>. That there is a *Misnommer* in the Title. The *Play* should not have been call'd the *Relapse*, or *Virtue in Danger*.

P Lovelace,

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Had your Eyes shot the haughty Austerity upon me of a right Courtier, — your valued <sup>P. 3d.</sup> minutes had never been disturb'd with dilatory Trifles of this Nature, but my Heart on dull Consideration of your Merit, had supinely wish'd your prosperity at a Distance. I'm afraid the Poet was under some Apprehensions of the Temper he complains of. For to my thinking, there is a great deal of Supineness, and dull Consideration in these Periods. He tells his Patron his Smiles have embolden'd him. I confess I can't see how He could forbear smiling at such Entertainment. However Mr. Durfey takes Things by the best Handle, and is resolv'd to

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P

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## Remarks upon

*Lovelace*, and *Amanda*, from whose *Characters* these Names are drawn, are Persons of Inferiour Consideration. *Lovelace* sinks in the middle of the *Fourth Act*, and we hear no more of him till towards the End of the *Fifth*, where he enters once more, but then 'tis as *Cato* did the Senate house, only to go out again. And as for *Amanda* she has nothing to do but to stand a shock of Courtship, and carry off her Virtue. This I confess is a great task in the *Play-house*, but no main matter in the *Play*.

The *Intrigue*, and the *Discovery*, the great Revolution and success, turns upon *Young Fashion*. He without Competition, is the Principal Person in the *Comedy*. And therefore the *Younger Brother*, or the *Fortunate Cheat*, had been much a more proper Name. Now when a *Poet* can't rig out a *Title Page*, 'tis but a bad sign of his holding out to the *Epilogue*.

2<sup>ly</sup>. I observe the *Moral* is vitious: It points the wrong way, and puts the *Prize* into the wrong Hand. It seems to make *Lewdness* the reason of *Desert*, and gives *Young Fashion* a Second Fortune, only for Debauching away his First. A short view of his *Character*, will make good this Reflection. To begin with him: He confesses himself a *Rake*, Swears, and Blasphemes,

## The Relapse.

211

Blasphemes, Curses, and Challenges his Elder Brother, cheats him of his Mistress, and gets him laid by the Heels in a Dog-Kennel. And what was the ground of all this unnatural quarrelling and outrage? Why the main of it was only because Lord *Foplington* refused to supply his Luxury, and make good his Extravagance. This *Young Fashion* after all, is the *Poet's* Man of Merit, He provides a *Plot* and a Fortune, on purpose for him. To speak freely, A Lewd Character seldom wants good Luck in *Comedy*. So that when ever you see a thorough Libertine, you may almost swear he is in a rising way, and that the *Poet* intends to make him a great Man. In short; This *Play* perverts the End of *Comedy*: Which as Monsieur *Rapin* observes ought to regard Reformation, and publick Improvement. But the *Relapser* *Resettl.*  
*Sc. P.*  
131. had a more fashionable Fancy in his Head. His *Moral* holds forth this notable Instruction.

1st. That all *Younger Brothers* should be careful to run out their Fortunes as Fast, and as Ill as they can. And when they have put their Affairs in this posture of Advantage, they may conclude themselves in the high Road to Wealth, and Success. For as *Fashion* Blasphemously applies it, *Providence takes care of Men of Merit.* *Relapse.*  
*P. 190*

P 2

2dly

## Remarks upon

2<sup>ly</sup>. That when a Man is press'd, his business is not to be govern'd by Scruples, or formalize upon Conscience and Honesty. The quickest Expedients are the best; For in such cases the Occasion justifies the Means, and a Knight of the *Post*, is as good as one of the *Garter*. In the

3<sup>d</sup>. Place it may not be improper to look a little into the *Plot*. Here the *Poet* ought to play the Politician if ever. This part should have some strokes, of Conduct, and strains of Invention more than ordinary. There should be something that is admirable, and unexpected to surprize the Audience. And all this Fineness must work by gentle degrees, by a due preparation of *Incidents*, and by Instruments which are probable. 'Tis Mr. *Rapins* remark, that without probability every *Thing is lame and Faulty*. Where there is no pretence to *Miracle* and *Machine*, matters must not exceed the force of Belief. To produce effects without proportion; and likelihood in the Cause, is Farce, and Magick, and looks more like Conjuring than Conduct. Let us examine the *Relapser* by these Rules. To discover his *Plot*, we must lay open somewhat more of the *Fable*.

'Lord *Foplington* a Town Beau, had agreed to Marry the Daughter of Sir

'*Tun*

Refl. 7.

P. 133.



'*Tun-belly Clumsey* a Country Gentleman,  
'who lived Fifty miles from *London*.  
'Notwithstanding this small distance, the  
'Lord had never seen his Mistress, nor  
'the Knight his Son in Law. Both parties  
'out of their great Wisdom, leave the  
'treating the Match to *Coupler*. When  
'all the Preliminaries of Settlement were  
'adjusted, and Lord *Foplington* expected  
'by Sir *Tun-belly* in a few days, *Coupler*  
'betrays his Trust to *Young Fashion*. He  
'advises him to go down before his Brother:  
'To Counterfeit his Person, and  
'pretend that the strength of his Inclinations  
'brought him thither before his time,  
'and without his Retinue. And to make  
'him pass upon Sir *Tun-belly*, *Coupler* gives  
'him his *Letter*, which was to be Lord  
'*Foplington's* Credential. *Young Fashion*  
'thus provided, posts down to Sir *Tun-*  
'*belly*, is recieved for Lord *Foplington*, and  
'by the help of a little Folly and Knavery  
'in the Family, Marries the young Lady  
'without her Fathers Knowledge, and a  
'week before the Appointment.

This is the Main of the Contrivance.  
The Counterturn in Lord *Foplington's* appearing  
afterwards, and the Support of the main Plot,  
by *Bull's*, and *Nurse's* attesting the Marriage,  
contains little of Moment. And here we may observe that

## Remarks upon

p. 27.

p. 79.

Ibid.

Lord *Foplington* has an unlucky Disagreement in his *Character*; This Misfortune sits hard upon the credibility of the Design. 'Tis true he was Formal and Fantastick, Smitten with Dress, and Equipage, and it may be vapour'd by his Perfumes; But his Behaviour is far from that of an Ideot. This being granted, 'tis very unlikely this Lord with his five Thousand pounds *per annum*, should leave the choice of his Mistress to *Coupler*, and take her Person and Fortune upon Content. To court thus blindfold, and by *Proxy*, does not agree with the Method of an Estate, nor the Niceness of a *Beau*. However the *Poet* makes him engage Hand over Head, without so much as the sight of her Picture. His going down to Sir *Tun-belly* was as extraordinary as his Courtship. He had never seen this Gentleman. He must know him to be beyond Measure suspicious, and that there was no Admittance without *Couplers* Letter. This Letter which was, the Key to the Castle, he forgot to take with him, and tells you 'twas stolen by his Brother *Tam*. And for his part he neither had the Discretion to get another, nor yet to produce that written by him to Sir *Tun-belly*. Had common Sense been consulted upon this Occasion, the Plot had been at an End, and the Play had sunk

in

in the Fourth *Act*. The Remainder subsists purely upon the strength of Folly, and of Folly altogether improbable, and out of *Character*. The *Salvo* of Sir *John Friendly*'s appearing at last, and vouching for Lord *Foplington*, won't mend the Matter. For as the *Story* informs us, Lord *Foplington* never depended on this Reserve: He knew nothing of this Gentleman being in the Country, nor where he Lived. The truth is, Sir *John* was left in *Town*, and the Lord had neither concerted his journey with him, nor engaged his Assistance.

Let us now see how Sir *Tun-belly* hangs together. This Gentleman the *Poet* makes a *Justice of Peace*, and a *Deputy Lieutenant*, and seats him fifty Miles from *London*: But by his Character you would take him for one of *Hercules's* Monsters, or some Gyant in *Guy of Warwick*, His Behaviour is altogether *Romance*, and has nothing agreeable to Time, or Country. When *Fashion*, and *Lory*, went down, they find the Bridge drawn up, the Gates barr'd, and the Blunderbuss cock'd at the first civil Question. And when Sir *Tun-belly* had notice of this formidable Appearance, he Sallies out with the *Posse* of the Family, and marches against a Couple of Strangers with a *Life Guard* of Halberds, Sythes,

## Remarks upon

and Pitchforks. And to make sure work, Young *Hoyden* is lock'd up at the first approach of the Enemy. Here you have prudence and wariness to the excess of Fable, and Frensy. And yet this mighty man of suspicion, trusts *Coupler* with the Disposal of his only Daughter, and his Estate into the Bargain. And what was this *Coupler*? Why a sharper by *Character*, and little better by Profession. Farther. Lord *Foplington* and the Knight, are but a days Journey asunder, and yet by their treating by Proxy, and Commission, one would Fancy a dozen Degrees of *Latitude* betwixt them. And as for Young *Fashion*, excepting *Couplers* Letter, he has all imaginable Marks of Imposture upon him. He comes before his Time, and without the Retinue expected, and has nothing of the Air of Lord *Foplington's* Conversation. When Sir *Tun-belly* ask'd him, *pray where are your Coaches and Servants my Lord?* He makes a trifling excuse. *Sir, that I might give you and your Fair Daughter a proof how impatient I am to be nearer akin to you, I left my Equipage to follow me, and came away Post, with only one Servant.* To be in such a Hurry of Inclination for a Person he never saw, is somewhat strange! Besides, 'tis very unlikely Lord *Foplington* should hazard his

Com-

Complexion on Horseback, out-ride his Figure, and appear a Bridegroom in *Deſhabille*. You may as ſoon perſwade a Peacock out of his Train, as a *Beau* out of his Equipage; eſpecially upon ſuch an Occaſion. Lord *Foplington* would ſcarſely ſpeak to his Brother juſt come a *Shore*, till the Grand Committee of *Tailors, Seamſtreſſes, &c.* was diſpatch'd. P. II. Pomp and Curioſity were this Lords Inclination; why then ſhould he mortifie without neceſſity, make his firſt Approaches thus out of Form, and preſent himſelf to his Miſtreſs at ſuch Diſadvantage? And as this is the Character of Lord *Foplington*, ſo 'tis reaſonable to ſuppoſe Sir *Tunbelly* acquainted with it. An enquiry into the Humour and management of a Son in Law, is very natural and Cuſtomary. So that we can't without Violence to Senſe, ſuppoſe Sir *Tunbelly* a Stranger to Lord *Foplington's* Singularities. Theſe Reaſons were enough in all Conſcience to make Sir *Tunbelly* ſuſpect a Juggle, and that *Faſbion* was no better then a Counterfeit. Why then was the *Credential* ſwallow'd without chewing, why was not *Hoyden* lock'd up, and a pauſe made for farther Enquiry? Did this *Juſtice* never hear of ſuch a Thing as Knavery, or had he ever greater reaſon to guard againſt it? More wary ſteps might

might well have been expected from Sir *Tun-belly*. To run from one extream of Caution, to another of Credulity, is highly improbable. In short, either Lord *Foplington* and Sir *Tun-belly* are Fools, or they are not. If they are, where lies the Cunning in over-reaching them? What Conquest can there be without Opposition? If they are not Fools, why does the *Poet* make them so? Why is their Conduct so gross, so particoulour'd, and inconsistent? Take them either way, and the *Plot* miscarries. The first supposition makes it dull, and the later, incredible. So much for the *Plot*. I shall now in the

4<sup>th</sup>. Place touch briefly upon the *Manners*.

The *Manners* in the Language of the *Stage* have a signification somewhat particular. *Aristotle* and *Rapin* call them the Causes and Principles of Action. They are formed upon the Diversities of Age, and Sex, of Fortune, Capacity, and Education. The propriety of *Manners* consists in a Conformity of Practise, and Principle; of Nature, and Behaviour. For the purpose. An old Man must not appear with the Profuseness and Levity of Youth; A Gentleman must not talk like a Clown, nor a Country Girl like a Town Jilt. And when the *Characters* are feign'd

'tis

'tis *Horace's* Rule to keep them Uniform, and consistent, and agreeable to their first setting out. The *Poet* must be careful to hold his *Persons* tight to their *Calling* and pretentions. He must not shift, and shuffle their *Understandings*; Let them skip from Wits to Blockheads, nor from Courtiers to Pedants. On the other hand. If their business is playing the Fool, keep them strictly to their Duty, and never indulge them in fine Sentences. To manage otherwise, is to desert *Nature*, and makes the *Play* appear monstrous, and Chimerical. So that instead of an *Image of Life*, 'tis rather an Image of Impossibility. To apply some of these remarks to the *Relapser*.

The fine *Berlinthea*, one of the Top-Characters, is impudent and Profane. *Lovelace* would engage her Secrecy, and bids her Swear. She answers *I do*.

Lov. By what?

Berinth. By Woman.

Lov. That's Swearing by my Deity, do it by your own, or I shan't believe you.

Berinth. By Man then.

This Lady promises *Worthy* her Endeavours to corrupt *Amanda*; and then They make a Profane jest upon the Office. In the progress of the *Play* after a great deal of Lewd Discourse with *Lovelace*,  
Ber-

P. 47.

P. 51.

P. 74.

Reflect.

P. 40.

Tragedies  
of the last  
Age consid-  
er'd &c.  
P. 113,  
114.

*Berinthia* is carried off into a Closet, and Lodged in a Scene of Debauch. Here is Decency, and Reservedness, to a great exactness! Monsieur *Rapin* blames *Ariosto*, and *Tasso*, for representing two of their Women over free, and airy. These Poets says he, rob Women of their Character, which is Modesty. Mr. Rymer is of the same Opinion: His words are these. *Nature knows nothing in the Manners which so properly, and particularly distinguish a Woman, as her Modesty.*— *An impudent Woman is fit only to be kicked, and expos'd in Comedy.*

Now *Berinthia* appears in Comedy 'tis true; but neither to be kick'd, nor expos'd. She makes a Considerable Figure, has good Usage, keeps the best Company, and goes off without Censure, or Disadvantage. Let us now take a Turn or two with Sir *Tun-belly's* Heiress of 1500 pounds a year. This young Lady Swears, talks Smart, and is upon the matter just as rag-manner'd as *Mary the Buxome*. 'Tis plain the *Relapser* copy'd Mr. *Durfey's* Original, which is a sign he was somewhat Pinch'd. Now this Character was no great Beauty in *Buxsome*; But it becomes the Knights Daughter much worse. *Buxsome* was a poor Peasant, which made her Rudeness more natural, and expected. But Deputy Lieutenants Children don't  
use



use to appear with the Behaviour of Beggars. To breed all People alike, and make no distinction between a *Seat*, and a *Cottage*, is not over artful, nor very ceremonious to the Country Gentlemen. The *Relapser* gives *Miss* a pretty Soliloquy, I'll transcribe it for the Reader.

She swears by her Maker, 'tis well I have a Husband a coming, or I'de Marry the Baker I would so. No body can knock at the Gate, but presently I must be lock'd up, and here's the Young Gray-hound——can run loose about the House all day long, she can, 'tis very well! Afterwards her Language is too Lewd to be Quoted. Here is a Compound of Ill Manners, and Contradiction! Is this a good Resemblance of Quality; a Description of a great Heiress, and the effect of a Cautious Education? By her Coarseness you would think her Bred upon a Common, and by her Confidence, in the Nursery of the *Play-House*. I suppose the *Relapser* Fancies the calling her *Miss Hoyden* is enough to justify her Ill Manners. By his favour, this is a Mistake. To represent her thus unhewn, he should have suited her Condition to her Name, a little better. For there is no Charm in Words as to matters of Breeding, An unfashionable Name won't make a Man a Clown. Education is not form'd upon  
Sounds,

## Remarks upon

Sounds, and Syllables, but upon Circumstances, and Quality. So that if he was resolv'd to have shown her thus unpolish'd, he should have made her keep *Sheep*, or brought her up at the *Wash-Bowl*.

p. 61.

Sir *Tun-belly* accosts Young *Fashion* much at the same rate of Accomplishment. My Lord,——*I humbly crave leave to bid you Welcome in a Cup of Sack-wine*. One would imagine the *Poet* was overdozed before he gave the *Justice* a Glass. For *Sack-wine* is too low for a *Petty Constable*. This Peasantly expression agrees neither with the Gentleman's Figure, nor with the rest of his Behaviour. I find we should have a Creditable *Magistracy*, if the *Relapser* had the Making them. Here the *Characters* are pinch'd in Sense, and stinted to short Allowance. At an other time they are over-indulged, and treated above Expectation.

For the purpose. Vanity and Formalizing is Lord *Foplington's* part. To let him speak without Aukwardness, and Affectation, is to put him out of his Element. There must be Gumm and stifening in his Discourse to make it natural. However, the *Relapser* has taken a fancy to his Person, and given him some of the most Gentile raillery in the whole *Play*. To give an Instance or two. This Lord

in

in Discourse with *Fashion* forgets his Name, flies out into Sense, and smooth expression, out-talks his Brother, and abating the starch'd Similitude of a *Watch*, discovers nothing of Affectation, for almost a *Page* together. He relapses into the same Intemperance of good Sense, in an other Dialogue between him and his Brother. I shall cite a little of it.

*T. Fash.* Unless you are so kind to assist me in redeeming my Annuity, I know no Remedy, but to go take a Purse.

*L. Fopl.* Why *Faith Tam*—to give you my Sense of the Thing, I do think taking a Purse the best Remedy in the World, for if you succeed, you are reliev'd that way, if you are taken—you are reliev'd to'ther.

*Fashion* being disappointed of a supply quarrels his Elder Brother, and calls him the Prince of Coxcombs.

*L. Fopl.* Sir I am proud of being at the Head of so prevailing a party.

*T. Fash.* Will nothing then provoke thee? draw Coward.

*L. Fopl.* Look you *Tam*, your poverty makes your Life so burdensome to you, you would provoke me to a Quarrel, in hopes either to slip through my Lungs into my Estate, or else to get your self run through the Guts, to put an end to your Pain. But I shall disappoint you in both, &c.

This

## Remarks upon

This Drolling has too much Spirit, the Air of it is too free, and too handsomely turn'd for Lord *Foplington's* Character. I grant the *Relapser* could not afford to lose these Sentences. The Scene would have suffer'd by the Omission. But then he should have contriv'd the matter so, as that they might, have been spoken by Young *Fashion* in *Asides*, or by some other more proper Person. To go on. Miss *Hoyden* sparkles too much in Conversation. The *Poet* must needs give her a shining Line or two, which serves only to make the rest of her dullness the more remarkable. Sir *Tun-belly* falls into the same Misfortune of a Wit, and rallies above the force of his Capacity. But the place having a mixture of Profaneness, I shall forbear to cite it. Now to what purpose should a Fools Coat be embroider'd? Finery in the wrong place is but expensive Ridiculousness. Besides, I don't perceive the *Relapser* was in any Condition to be thus liberal. And when a *Poet* is not overstock'd, to squander away his Wit among his *Block-heads*, is meer Distraction. His men of Sense will smart for this prodigality. *Lovelace* in his discourse of *Friendship*, shall be the first Instance. *Friendship* (says he) is said to be a plant of tedious growth, its Root composed of tender Fibers,

nice

p. 64.  
At top.

p. 59.

nice in their Taſt, &c. By this Deſcription the Paſate of a *Fiber*, ſhould be ſomewhat more *nice* and diſtinguiſhing, then the *Poets* Judgment. Let us examin ſome more of his Witty People. Young *Faſhion* fancies by *Miſſes* forward Behaviour, ſhe would have a whole *Kennel* of *Beaux* after her at *London*. And then *Hey to the Park, and the Play, and the Church, and the Devil*. Here I conceive the ranging of the Period is amiſs. For if he had put the *Play*, and the *Devil* together, the Order of Nature, and the Air of Probability had been much better obſerv'd.

Afterwards *Coupler* being out of Breath in coming up ſtairs to *Faſhion*, asks him why the——can'ſt thou not lodge upon the Ground-floor? p. 64.

*T. Faſh.* *Becauſe I love to lye as near Heaven as I can.* One would think a Spark juſt come off his Travels, and had made the *Tour* of *Italy* and *France*, might have rallied with a better Grace! However if he lodg'd in a *Garret*, 'tis a good *Local* jeſt. I had almoſt forgot one pretty remarkable Sentence of *Faſhion* to *Lory*. I p. 15.  
ſhall ſhew thee ( ſays he ) the exceſs of my *Paſſion* by being very calm. Now ſince this *Gentleman* was in a vein of talking *Philoſophy* to his Man, I'm ſorry he broke of ſo quickly. Had he gone on and ſhown

Q

him

## Remarks upon

him the *Excess* of a Storm and no Wind stirring, the Topick had been spent, and the Thought improv'd to the utmost.

Let us now pass on to *Worthy*, the *Rapser's* fine Gentleman. This Spark sets up for Sense, and Address, and is to have nothing of Affectation or Conscience to spoil his Character. However to say no more of him, he grows Foppish in the last *Scene*, and courts *Amanda* in Fustian, and Pedantry. First, He gives his Periods a turn of Versification, and talks *Prose* to her in *Meeter*. Now this is just as agreeable as it would be to *Ride* with one Leg, and *Walk* with the other. But let him speak for himself. His first business is to bring *Amanda* to an Aversion for her Husband; And therefore he perswades her to *Rouse up that Spirit Women ought to bear; and slight your God if he neglects his Angel.* He goes on with his Orisons. *With Arms of Ice receive his Cold Embraces, and keep your Fire for those that come in Flames.* Fire and Flames, is Mettal upon Mettal; 'Tis false Heraldry. *Extend the Arms of Mercy to his Aid.* His zeal may give him Title to your Pity, altho' his Merit cannot claim your Love. Here you have *Arms* brought in again by Head and shoulders. I suppose the design was to keep up the Situation of the *Allegory*. But the latter

p. 39.

*Ibid.*

part

part of the Speech is very Pithy. He would have her resign her Virtue out of Civility, and abuse her Husband on Principles of good Nature. *Worthy* pursues his point, and Rises in his Address. He falls into a Fit of Dissection, and hopes to gain his Mistress by Cutting his Throat. He is for *Ripping up his Faithful Breast*, to prove the Reality of his Passion. Now when a Man Courts with his Heart in his Hand, it must be great Cruelty to refuse him! No Butcher could have Thought of a more moving Expedient! However, *Amanda* continues obstinate, and is not in the usual Humour of the Stage. Upon this, like a well bred Lover he seizes her by Force, and threatens to Kill her. *Nay struggle not for all's in vain, or Death, or Victory, I am determin'd.* In this rencounter the Lady proves too nimble, and slips through his Fingers. Upon this disappointment, he cries, *there's Divinity about her, and she has dispens'd some portion on't to me.* His Passion is Metamorphos'd in the Turn of a hand: He is refin'd into a Platonick Admirer, and goes off as like a Town Spark as you would wish. And so much for the Poet's fine Gentleman.

I should now examine the *Relapser's* Thoughts and Expressions, which are two other Things of Consideration in a Play.

## Remarks upon

The *Thoughts* or *Sentiments* are the *Expressions* of the *Manners*, as *Words* are of the *Thoughts*. But the view of the *Characters* has in some measure prevented this Enquiry. Leaving this Argument therefore, I shall consider his *Play* with respect to the

Three *Unities* of *Time*, *Place*, and *Action*.

And here the *Reader* may please to take notice, that the Design of these Rules, is to conceal the *Fiction* of the *Stage*, to make the *Play* appear *Natural*, and to give it an *Air* of *Reality*, and *Conversation*.

The largest compass for the first *Unity* is *Twenty Four Hours*: But a lesser proportion is more regular. To be exact, the *Time* of the *History*, or *Fable*, should not exceed that of the *Representation*: Or in other words, the whole *Business* of the *Play*, should not be much longer than the *Time* it takes up in *Playing*.

The Second *Unity* is that of *Place*. To observe it, the *Scene* must not wander from one *Town*, or *Country* to another. It must continue in the same *House*, *Street*, or at farthest in the same *City*, where it was first laid. The Reason of this Rule depends upon the *First*. Now the Compass of *Time* being strait, that of *Space* must bear a *Correspondent Proportion*.

Long



Long journeys in *Plays* are impracticable. The Distances of *Place* must be suited to Leisure, and Possibility, otherwise the supposition will appear unnatural and absurd.

The

Third *Unity* is that of *Action*; It consists in contriving the chief Business of the *Play* single, and making the concerns of one Person distinguishably great above the rest. All the Forces of the *Stage* must as it were serve Under one *General*: And the lesser Intrigues or Under-plots, have some Relation to the Main. The very Oppositions must be useful, and appear only to be Conquer'd, and Countermin'd. To represent Two considerable Actions independent of each other, Destroys the beauty of Subordination, weakens the Contrivance, and dilutes the pleasure. It splits the *Play*, and makes the *Poem* double. He that would see more upon this subject may consult *Cornelle*. To bring these Remarks to the Case in hand. And here we may observe how the *Relapser* fails in all the *Rules* above mention'd.

*Discourse  
des Trois  
Unitez.  
p. 3d.*

1<sup>st</sup>. His *Play* by modest Computation takes up a weeks Work, but five days you must allow it at the lowest. One day must be spent in the First, Second, and part of the Third *Act*, before Lord *Foplington* sets forward to Sir *Tun-belly*. Now the Length

of the Distance, the Pomp of the Retinue, and the Niceness of the Person being consider'd; the journey down, and up again, cannot be laid under four days. To put this out of doubt, Lord *Foplington*, is particularly careful to tell *Coupler*, how concern'd he was not to overdrive, for fear of disordering his Coach-Horses. The Laws of Place, are no better observ'd than those of Time. In the Third *Act* the Play is in Town, in the Fourth *Act* 'tis stroll'd Fifty Miles off, and in the Fifth *Act* in London again. Here *Pegasus* stretches it to purpose! This *Poet* is fit to ride a Match with Witches. *Juliana Cox* never Switched a Broom stick with more Expedition! This is exactly

*Titus* at *Walton Town*, and *Titus* at *Islington*.

One would think by the probability of matters, the Plot had been stolen from *Dr. O*.

The *Poet's* Success in the last *Unity* of *Action* is much the same with the former. *Lovelace*, *Amanda*, and *Berinthia*, have no share in the main Business. These Second rate Characters are a detached Body: Their Interest is perfectly Foreign, and they are neither Friends nor Enemies to  
the

the Plot. *Young Fashion* does not so much as see them till the Close of the Fifth Act, and then they meet only to fill the Stage: And yet these *Persons* are in the *Poet's* account very considerable; Inasmuch that he has misnamed his *Play* from the Figure of two of them. This strangeness of *Persons*, distinct Company, and inconnexion of Affairs, destroys the Unity of the *Poem*. The contrivance is just as wise as it would be to cut a Diamond in two. There is a loss of Lustre in the Division. Increasing the Number, abates the Value, and by making it more, you make it less.

Thus far I have examin'd the *Dramatick* Merits of the *Play*. And upon enquiry, it appears a Heap of Irregularities. There is neither Propriety in the *Name*, nor Contrivance in the *Plot*, nor Decorum in the *Characters*. 'Tis a thorough Contradiction to Nature, and impossible in *Time*, and *Place*. Its *Shining Grates* as the Au-

Prof.

thor calls them, are *Blasphemy* and *Baudy*, together with a mixture of *Oaths*, and *Cursing*. Upon the whole; The *Relapser's* Judgment, and his *Morals*, are pretty well adjusted. The *Poet*, is not much better than the *Man*. As for the *Profane* part, 'tis hideous and superlative. But this I have consider'd elsewhere. All that I shall observe here is, that the Author was

see Chap.  
2d.

sensible of this Objection. His Defence in his *Preface* is most wretched: He pretends to know nothing of the Matter, and that 'tis all *Printed*; Which only proves his Confidence equal to the rest of his Virtues. To out-face Evidence in this manner, is next to the affirming there's no such Sin as *Blasphemy*, which is the greatest *Blasphemy* of all. His Apology consists in railing at the *Clergy*; a certain sign of ill Principles, and ill Manners. This He does at an unusual rate of Rudeness and Spite. He calls them the Saints with Screw'd Faces, and wry Mouths. And after a great deal of scurrilous Abuse too gross to be mention'd, he adds; *If any Man happens to be offended at a story of a Cock and a Bull, and a Priest and a Bull-dog, I beg his Pardon, &c.* This is brave Bear-Garden Language! The Relapser would do well to transport his Muse to *Samourgan*\* There 'tis likely he might find Leisure to lick his *Abortive Brat* into shape; And meet with proper Business for his Temper, and encouragement for his Talent.

*Pref.*

*An Academy in Lithuania, for the Education of Bears.*

*Pere Aurill Voyage en Divers Etats, &c. p. 240.*

CHAP.

## CHAP. IV.

*The Opinion of the Pagans, of the Church,  
and State, concerning the Stage.*

**H**AVING in the foregoing *Chapters* discover'd some part of the Disorders of the *English Stage*; I shall in this Last, present the *Reader* with a short View of the Sense of *Antiquity*, To which I shall add some *Modern Authorities*; From all which it will appear that *Plays* have generally been look'd on as the *Nurseries* of *Vice*, the *Corrupters* of *Youth*, and the *Grievance* of the *Country* where they are suffer'd.

This proof from *Testimony* shall be ranged under these three Heads.

Under the *First*, I shall cite some of the most celebrated *Heathen Philosophers*, *Orators*, and *Historians*; Men of the biggest Consideration, for Sense, Learning, and Figure. The

*Second*, Shall consist of the *Laws* and *Constitutions* of *Princes*, &c. The

*Third*, Will be drawn from *Church-Records*, from *Fathers*, and *Councils* of unexceptionable

## The Opinion of the Pagans

ceptionable Authority, both as to Persons, and Time.

*1st.* I shall produce some of the most celebrated Heathen Philosophers &c. To begin with *Plato*. 'This Philosopher tells us  
*Plat. de* 'that *Plays* raise the Passions, and pervert  
*Repub. Lib.* 'the use of them, and by consequence are  
*10 Ensch.* 'dangerous to Morality. For this Rea-  
*Prapar.* 'son he banishes these Diversions his Com-  
*Evang.* 'mon-Wealth.

*Xenophon* who was both a Man of Letters and a great General, commends the  
*Cyropad.* *Persians* for the Discipline of their Edu-  
*p. 34.* cation. 'They won't (says he) so much  
 'as suffer their Youth to hear any thing  
 'that's Amorous or Tawdry. They  
 were afraid want of Ballast might make  
 them miscarry, and that 'twas dangerous  
 to add weight to the Byass of Nature.

*Aristotle* lays it down for a Rule 'that  
 'the Law ought to forbid Young People  
*Polit. Lib.* 'the seeing of *Comedies*. Such permissions  
*7. cap. 17.* 'not being safe till Age and Discipline  
 'had confirm'd them in sobriety, forti-  
 'fied their Virtue, and made them as it  
 'were proof against Debauchery. This  
 Philosopher who had look'd as far into  
 Humane Nature as any Man, observes  
 farther. 'That the force of Musick and  
 'Action is very affecting. It commands  
 'the Audience and changes the Passions to

*Polit.*  
*Lib. 8.*

'a

'a Resemblance of the Matter before them. So that where the Representation is foul, the Thoughts of the Company must suffer.

Tully crys out upon 'Licentious Plays Tusc. Quest. Lib. 4. and Poems, as the bane of Sobriety, and De Leg. Lib. 1. 'wise Thinking: That Comedy subsists upon Lewdness, and that Pleasure is the 'Root of all Evil.

Livy, reports the Original of Plays among the Romans. 'He tells us they 'were brought in upon the score of Religion, to pacifie the Gods, and remove a 'Mortality. But then He adds that the 'Motives are sometimes good, when the 'Means are stark naught: That the Re- Dec. 1. Lib. 7. medy in this case was worse than the 'Disease, and the Atonement more Infectious then the Plague.

Valerius Maximus, Contemporary with Livy, gives much the same Account of the rise of Theatres at Rome. 'Twas Devotion which built them. And as for 'the Performances of those Places, which 'Mr. Dryden calls the Ornaments, this Author censures as the Blemishes of Peace. And which is more, He affirms 'They 'were the Occasions of Civil Distractions; and that the State first Blush'd and 'then Bled, for the Entertainment. He Lib. 2. cap. 4. concludes the consequences of Plays in 'tolerable;

## The Opinion of the Pagans

Natural  
Quest. Lib.  
7. cap. 32.

Epi. 7.

Annal.  
Lib. 14  
cap. 14.

‘tolerable; And that the *Massilienses* did well  
‘in clearing the Country of them. *Seneca*  
‘complains heartily of the Extravagance  
‘and Debauchery of the Age: And how  
‘forward People were to improve in that  
‘which was naught. That scarce any Body  
‘would apply themselves to the Study of  
‘Nature and Morality, unless when the  
‘*Play-House* was shut, or the Weather  
‘foul. That there was no body to teach  
‘*Philosophy*, because there was no body  
‘to Learn it: But that the *Stage* had *Nur-*  
‘*series*, and Company enough. This Mis-  
‘application of time and Fancy, made  
‘Knowledge in so ill a Condition. This  
‘was the Cause the Hints of Antiquity  
‘were no better pursued; that some In-  
‘ventions were sunk, and that Humane  
‘Reason grew Downwards rather than  
‘otherwise. And elsewhere he avers that  
‘there is nothing more destructive to Good  
‘Manners then to run Idling to see *Sights*.  
‘For there Vice makes an insensible Ap-  
‘proach, and steals upon us in the Dis-  
‘guise of pleasure.

‘*Tacitus* relating how *Nero* hired de-  
‘cay’d Gentlemen for the *Stage*, com-  
‘plains of the Mismanagement; And lets  
‘us know ’twas the part of a Prince to re-  
‘lieve their Necessity, and not to Tempt  
‘it. And that his Bounty should rather  
‘have



'have set them above an ill practise, than  
'driven them upon't.

And in another place, He informs us  
that 'the German Women were Guard-  
'ed against danger, and kept their Honour  
'out of Harms way, by having no *Play-*  
*Houses* amongst them.

*De Mor.  
German.  
cap. 19.*

*Plays*, in the Opinion of the Judicious  
*Plutarch* are dangerous to corrupt Young  
People; And therefore *Stage Poetry* when  
it grows too hardy, and Licentious,  
ought to be checkt. This was the Opi-  
nion of these Celebrated *Authors* with  
respect to *Theatres*: They Charge them  
with the Corruption of Principles, and  
Manners, and lay in all imaginable Cau-  
tion against them. And yet these Men  
had seldom any thing but this World in  
their Scheme; and form'd their Judg-  
ments only upon Natural Light, and Com-  
mon Experience. We see then to what sort  
of Conduct we are oblig'd. The case is  
plain; Unless we are little enough to re-  
nounce our Reason, and fall short of Phi-  
losophy, and live *under* the Pitch of *Hea-*  
*thenism*.

*Symposiac.  
Lib. 7.  
De Audi-  
ent. Poet.  
p. 15.  
Ed. 2<sup>a</sup>.*

To these Testimonies I shall add a  
Couple of *Poets*, who both seem good  
Judges of the Affair in Hand.

The first is *Ovid*, who in his Book  
*De Arte Amandi*, gives his Reader to under-  
stand

## The Opinion of the Pagans

stand that the *Play House* was the most likely Place for him to Forage in. Here would be choice of all sorts: Nothing being more common than to see Beauty surpriz'd, Women debauch'd, and Wenchcs Pick'd up at these Diversions.

Lib. 1.

*Sed tu praeipue curvis venare Theatris,  
Hæc loca sunt voto fertiliora tuo.*

—rui ad celebres cultissima Famina  
Ludos;

*Copia iudicium sæpe morata meum est.*

*Spektatum veniunt, veniunt Spektentur ut  
ipsa;*

*Ille locus casti damna pudoris habet.*

And afterwards relating the imperfect beginning of *Plays* at the Rape of the *Sabine Virgins*, he adds,

*Scilicet ex illo solennia more Theatra  
Nunc quoque formosis insidiosa manent.*

This *Author*, some time after wrote the *Remedy of Love*. Here he pretends to Prescribe for Prudence, if not for Sobriety. And to this purpose, He forbids the seeing of *Plays*, and the reading of *Poets*, especially some of them. Such Recreations being apt to feed the *Distemper*, and make the *Patient* relapse.

At

*At tanti tibi sit non indulgere Theatris  
Dum bene de vacuo Pectore cedat amor.*

*Emervant animos Citharæ, Cantusque, lyra-*  
*que*

*Remed.  
Amor.*

*Et vox, & numeris brachia mota suis.  
Illic assidue ficti saltantur amantes,  
Quid caveas; actor, quid juvet, arte docet.*

In his *De Tristibus*, He endeavours to make some Amends for his scandalous Poems, and gives *Augustus* a sort of Plan for a Publick Reformation. Amongst other Things, he advises the suppressing of Plays, as being the promoters of Lewdness, and Dissolution of Manners.

*Ut tamen hoc fatear ludi quoque semina Lib. 2.*  
*præbent*

*Nequitia, tolli tota Theatra jube.*

To the Testimony of *Ovid*, I could add *Plautus*, *Propertius*, and *Juvenal*, but being not willing to over-burthen the Reader, I shall content my self with the Plain-Dealer as one better known at Home.

This Poet in his Dedication to Lady B, some Eminent Procuress, pleads the Merits of his Function, and insists on being Billeted upon free Quarter. Madam (says he) I think a Poet ought to be as free of  
your

# The Opinion of the State

Ep. Ded.

your Houses, as of the Play-Houses : since he contributes to the support of both, and is as necessary to such as you, as the Ballad-singer to the Pick-purse, in Convening the Cullies at the Theatres to be pick'd up, and Carried to a supper, and Bed at your Houses. This is franck Evidence, and ne're the less true, for the Air of a Jest.

I shall now in the Second

Place proceed to the *Censures* of the State; And show in a few Words how much the Stage stands discouraged by the *Laws* of other Countrys and our own;

Plut. De  
Glor. Athenians.

To begin with the *Athenians*, This People tho' none of the worst Friends to the Play-House 'thought a Comedy so un-reputable a Performance, that they made 'a Law that no Judge of the *Areiopagus* 'should make one.

Plut. Lacon  
con Inflis-  
sur.

The *Lacedemonians*, who were remarkable for the Wisdom of their *Laws*, the Sobriety of their *Manners*, and their Breeding of brave Men. This Government would not endure the Stage in any Form, nor under any Regulation.

Cic. de Re-  
pub. Lib.  
4. cited by  
St. Augu-  
stine. Lib.  
2. de civ.  
dei cap.  
13.

To pass on to the *Romans*. Tully informs us 'that their *Predecessours* counted 'all Stage-Plays uncreditable and Scandalous. In so much that any Roman who 'turn'd Actor was not only to be Degraded, 'but likewise as it were disincorporated,  
and

‘and unnaturalized by the Order of the  
‘*Censors*.

St. *Augustine* in the same Book, com- L. 2. cap.  
mends the *Romans* for refusing the *Jus Ci-* 29.  
*vitatis* to *Players*, for seizing their Free-  
doms, and making them perfectly Foreign  
to their *Government*.

We read in *Livy* that the Young Peo- Dec. 1.  
ple in *Rome* kept the *Fabula Attellane* to Libr. 7.  
themselves. ‘They would not suffer this  
‘*Diversion* to be blemish’d by the *Stage*. Ab *Histri-*  
‘For this reason, as the *Historian* observes, onibus *Pol-*  
‘the *Actors* of the *Fabula Atellana* were lui.  
‘neither expell’d their *Tribe*, nor refused to  
‘serve in *Arms*; Both which Penalties it ap-  
‘pears the *Common Players* lay under.

In the *Theodosian Code*, *Players* are cal- XV. Cod.  
led *Personæ inhonestæ*; that is, to Translate it Theod. Tit.  
softly, Persons Maim’d, and Blemish’d in vii. p. 378.  
their Reputation. Their *Pictures* might  
be seen at the *Play-House*, but were not  
permitted to hang in any creditable Place \* in loco Ho-  
of the *Town*. Upon this *Text Gothofred* nesto.  
tells us the Function of *Players* was coun-  
ted scandalous \* by the *Civil Law*. L. 4. turpe mu-  
And that those who came upon the *Stage* nus.  
to divert the people, had a mark of Infamy  
set upon them. *Famosi sunt ex Edicto*.

I shall now come down to our own L. 1. § 6.  
*Constitution*. And I find by 39. Eliz. cap. no: autur  
4. 1. Jac. cap. 7. That infamia.  
Gothofred,  
Ibid.

R

All 376.

## The Opinion of the State

All Bearwards, Common Players of Enterludes, Counterfeit Egyptians &c. shall be taken, adjudged and deem'd Rogues, Vagabonds, andurdy beggars, and shall sustain all pain and Punishment, as by th's Act is in that behalf appointed.

The *Penalties* are infamous to the last degree, and *Capital* too, unless they give over. 'Tis true, the first *Act* excepts those *Players* which belong to a Baron or other Personage of higher Degree, and are authorized to play under the hand and Seal of Arms of such Baron, or Personage. But by the later *Statute* this Privilege of *Licensing* is taken away: And all of them are expressly brought under the Penalty without Distinction.

About the Year 1580, there was a Petition made to Queen *Elizabeth* for suppressing of *Play-Houses*. 'Tis somewhat remarkable, and therefore I shall transcribe some part of the Relation.

Many Godly Citizens, and other well disposed Gentlemen of London, considering that *Play-Houses* and *Dicing-Houses*, were Traps for Young Gentlemen and others, and perceiving the many Inconveniencies and great damage that would ensue upon the long suffering of the same, not only to particular Persons but to the whole City; And that it would also be a great disparagement to the Governours, and a dishonour to the Government of this Honourable City, if they should,

any

any longer continue, acquainted some Pious Magistrates therewith, desiring them to take some Course for the suppression of Common Play-Houses, &c. within the City of London and Liberties thereof; who thereupon made humble suit to Queen Elizabeth and her Privy Council, and obtain'd leave of her Majesty to thrust the Players out of the City, and to pull down all Play-Houses, and Dicing-Houses within their Liberties, which accordingly was effected. And the Play-Houses in Grace-Church-street &c. were quite put down and suppress'd.

Rawlidge  
his Mon-  
ster, lately  
found out,  
&c. p. 2,  
3, 4.

I shall give a Modern Instance or two from France, and so conclude these Authorities.

Gazett  
Rotterdam.  
Dec. 20.  
Paris.

In the Year 1696. we are inform'd by a Dutch Print, M. L' Archevêque appuyé &c 'That the Lord Arch-Bishop supported 'by the Interest of some Religious Persons at Court, has done his utmost to 'suppress the Publick Theatres by degrees; or at least to clear them of Profaneness.

And last Summer the Gazetts, in the Paris Article affirm. That the King has 'order'd the Italian Players to retire out 'of France because they did not observe 'his Majesties Orders, but represented im- 'modest Pieces, and did not correct their 'Obscenities, and indecent Gestures.

French  
Amsterdam  
tias ten  
Gazetts.  
Paris,  
May, 17<sup>th</sup>  
1697.

## The Opinion of the State

The same *Intelligence* the next week after, acquaints us ' that some Persons of ' the first *Quality* at Court, who were ' the Protectors of these *Comedians*, had solicited the French King to recal his *Order* against them, but their Request had ' no success.

And here to put an end to the Modern Authorities, I shall subjoyn a sort of *Pastoral Letter* publish'd about two years since by the Bishop of *Arras* in *Flanders*. The *Reader* shall have as much of it as concerns him in both Languages.

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# MANDEMENT DE MONSEIGNEUR

L' *Illustrissime Et Reverendissime*  
EVE QUE D' ARRAS  
CONTRE LA COMEDIE.

**G**UY DE SEVE DE ROCHE CHOUART  
par la grace de Dieu & du Saint Siège Apo-  
stolique Evêque d' Arras, A tous fideles dela Ville d'  
Arras Salut & Benediction. Il faut ignorer sa Re-  
ligion pour ne pas connoître l'horreur qu'elle a mar-  
quée dans tous les temps des Spectacles, & de la  
Comedie en particulier. Les saints Peres la con-  
damnent dans leurs écrits ; Ils la regardent com-  
me un reste du paganisme, & Comme une école d'  
impureté. L' Eglise l' a toujours regardée avec abo-  
mination, & si elle n'a pas absolument rejeté de  
son sein ceux qui exercent ce métier infame &  
scandaleux, elle les prive publiquement des Sacre-  
mens, & n' oublie rien pour marquer en toutes ren-  
contres son aversion pour cet état & pour l' inspirer  
a ses Enfans. Des Rituels de Diocèses tres réglés  
les mettent au nombre des personnes que les Curés  
sont obligés de traiter comme excommuniés ; Celui  
de Paris les joint aux Sorciers, & aux Magiciens,  
& les regarde comme manifestement infames Les,  
Eveques les plus saints leur font refuser publiquement,  
les Sacremens ; Nous avons vu un des premiers  
Eveques de France ne vouloir pas par cette raison re-  
cevoir au mariage un homme de cet état ; un autre  
ne vouloir pas leur accorder la terre Sainte ; Et dans

# The Opinion of the State

les Statuts d'un prelat bien plus illustre par son mérite, par sa Piété, & par l'austerité de sa vie que par la pourpre dont il est revêtu, on les trouve avec les concubinaires, les Usuriers, les Blasphémateurs, les Femmes debauchées, les excommuniés dénoncés, les Infames, les Simoniaque's, & autres personnes scandaleuses mis au nombre de ceux à qui on doit refuser publiquement la Communion.

Il est donc impossible de justifier la Comédie sans vouloir condamner l'Eglise, les saints peres, les plus saint Prelats, mais il ne l'est pas moins de justifier ceux qui par leur assistance à ces spectacles non seulement prennent part au mal qui s'y fait, mais contribuent en même temps à retenir ces malheureux ministres de Satan dans une profession, qui les separant des Sacremens de l'Eglise les met dans un état perpétuel de péché & hors de salut s'ils ne l'abandonnent.

Et à egard des Comédiens & Commediennes, Nous defendons très expressement à nos pasteurs & à nos Confesseurs des les recevoir aux Sacremens si ce n'est qu'ils aient fait Penitence de leur péché, donné des preuves d'amendement, renoncé à leur Etat, & repare par une satisfaction publique telle que nous jugerons à propos de leur ordonner, le Scandale public qu'ils ont donné. Fait & ordonné à Arras le quatrième jour de Decembre mil six cent quatre-vingt quinze.

Guy Evêque d'Arras

Et plus bas

Par Monseigneur

CARON.

Trois Lettres Pastorales De Monseigneur L'Eveque D'Arras, &c.  
A Delf.  
1697.

In English thus,

*An Order of the most Illu-  
strious and most Reverend  
Lord Bishop of Arras a-  
gainst Plays.*

GUY DE SEVE DE ROCHE  
'CHOUART by the grace of God,  
'*Ec.* Bishop of *Arras*. To all the Faithful  
'in the Town of *Arras* Health and Bene-  
'diction. A man must be very ignorant  
'of his Religion, not to know the great  
'disgust it has always declar'd, for *Pub-  
lick Sights*, and for *Plays* in particular.  
'The *Holy Fathers* condemn them in  
'their writings; They look upon them  
'as reliques of Heathenism, and Schools of  
'Debauchery. They have been always  
'abominated by the Church; And not-  
'withstanding those who are concern'd  
'in this Scandalous Profession: are not  
'absolutely expell'd by a Formal Excom-  
'munication, yet she publickly refuses  
'them the Sacraments, and omits nothing  
'upon all occasions, to show her aversion  
'for this Employment, and to transfuse

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## The Opinion of the State

' the same sentiments into her Children.  
 ' The *Rituals* of the best govern'd Dioceses,  
 ' have ranged the *Players* among those  
 ' whom the Parish Priests are oblig'd to  
 ' treat as Excommunicated Persons. The  
 ' *Ritual* of *Paris* joyns them with Sorce-  
 ' rers, and Magicians, and looks upon them  
 ' as notoriously infamous; The most emi-  
 ' nent Bishops for Piety, have publickly  
 ' denied them the Sacraments: For this  
 ' reason, we our selves have known one  
 ' of the most considerable Bishops in *France*;  
 ' turn back a *Player* that came to be  
 ' Married; And an other of the same order,  
 ' refused to bury them in Consecrated  
 ' Ground: And by the *Orders* of a Bishop,  
 ' who is much more illustrious for his  
 ' worth, for his Piety, and the Strictness  
 ' of his Life, than for the *Purple* in his  
 ' Habit; They are thrown amongst For-  
 ' nicators, Usurers, Blasphemers, Lewd  
 ' Women, and declar'd Excommunicates,  
 ' amongst the Infamous, and Simoniackal,  
 ' and other Scandalous Persons who are in  
 ' the List of those who ought pulickly to  
 ' be barr'd Communion.

' Unless therefore we have a mind to  
 ' condemn the Church, the Holy Fathers,  
 ' and the most holy Bishops, 'tis impossi-  
 ' ble to justifie *Plays*; neither is the De-  
 ' fence of those leis impracticable, who  
 ' by

‘by their Countenance of these Diversions,  
 ‘not only have their share of the Mis-  
 ‘chief there done, but contribute at the  
 ‘same time to fix these unhappy Ministers  
 ‘of Satan in a Profession, which by de-  
 ‘priving them of the Sacraments of the  
 ‘Church, leaves them under a constant  
 ‘necessity of Sinning, and out of all hopes  
 ‘of being saved, unless they give it  
 ‘over. —

From the general Unlawfulness of *Plays*,  
 the Bishop proceeds to argue more strong-  
 ly against seeing them at times which  
 are more particularly devoted to Piety,  
 and Humiliation: And therefore he strick-  
 ly forbids his Diocess the *Play-House*  
 in *Advent*, *Lent*, or under any publick  
*Calamity*. And at last concludes in this  
 Manner.

‘As for the Case of *Players* both Men,  
 ‘and Women, we expressly forbid all our  
 ‘Rectors, Pastors, and Confessors, to ad-  
 ‘mit them to the Sacraments, unless they  
 ‘shall repent them of their Crime, make  
 ‘proof of their Reformation, renounce  
 ‘their *Business*, and retrieve the Scandal  
 ‘they have given, by such publick Satis-  
 ‘faction as we shall think proper to in-  
 ‘joyn them. Made and Decreed at *Arras*  
 ‘the fourth day of *December* 1695.

*Guy* Bishop of *Arras*. &c.

I shall now in the Third Place, give a short account of the Sense of the *Primitive Church* concerning the Stage: And first I shall instance in her Councils.

Ann. 305.  
Can. 67. The Council of *Illiberis*, or *Collioure* in Spain, decrees,

‘That it shall not be lawful for any  
‘Woman who is either in full Communion  
‘or a probationer for Baptism, to Marry,  
‘or Entertain any *Comeaians* or *Actors*; who-  
‘ever takes this Liberty shall be Excom-  
‘municated.

Ann. 314.  
Can. 5. The First Council of *Arles*, runs thus,  
Concerning *Players*, ‘we have thought  
‘fit to Excommunicate them as long as they  
‘continue to *Act*.

Ann. 452. The Second Council of *Arles* made their  
20th Canon to the same purpose, and al-  
most in the same words.

Ann. 397.  
Can. 11. The Third Council of *Carthage*, of which  
St. *Augustine* was a Member, ordains,

‘That the Sons of Bishops, or other  
‘Clergy-men should not be permitted to  
‘furnish out Publick *Shews*, or *Plays* \* or  
‘be present at them: Such sort of Pagan  
‘Entertainments being forbidden all the  
‘*Laiety*. It being always unlawful for all  
‘Christians to come amongst *Blasphe-*  
‘*mers*.

\* *Secula-*  
*ria specta-*  
*cula, which*  
*manifestly*  
*compre-*  
*hends the*  
*Stage.*

This

This last branch shews the *Canon* was Principally levell'd against the *Play-House*: And the reason of the Prohibition, holds every jot as strong against the *English*, as against the *Roman Stage*.

By the 35th *Canon* of this *Council* 'tis decreed,

'That *Actors* or others belonging to the 'Stage, who are either *Converts*, or *Penitents* upon a Relapse, shall not be denied 'Admission into the Church. This is farther proof, that *Players* as long as they kept to their Employment were bar'd *Communion*.

Another *African Council* declares,

'That the Testimony of People of ill Ann. 424.  
'Reputation, of *Players*, and others of such Can. 96.  
'scandalous Employments, shall not be admitted against any Person.

The Second *Council* of *Chaalon* sets Council.  
forth, Cabillon.

'That Clergy men ought to abstain Ann. 813.  
'from all over-engaging Entertainments Can. 9.  
'in Musick or *Show*. (*oculorum auriumque illecebris*.) And as for the smutty, and Licentious Insolence of *Players*, and Buffoons, let them not only decline the Hearing it themselves, but likewise conclude 'the *Laity* oblig'd to the same Conduct.

I could cite many more Authorities of this Kind, but being conscious of the Niceness

# The Opinion of the Church

ness of the *Age*, I shall forbear, and proceed to the Testimony of the *Fathers*.

To begin with *Theophilus* Bishop of *Antioch*, who lived in the Second Century.

*Libr. 3.  
ad Autol.*

‘Tis not lawful (says he) for us to be present at the *Prizes* of your *Gladiators*, least by this means we should be *Accessaries* to the Murthers there committed. Neither dare we presume upon the Liberty of your other *Shews* \* least our Senses should be tinctur’d, and disoblig’d, with Indecency, and Profaneness. The Tragical Distractions of *Tereus* and *Thyestes*, are Nonsense to us. We are for seeing no Representations of Lewdness. The Stage-Adulteries of the *Gods*, and *Hero’s*, are unwarrantable Entertainments: And so much the worse, because the Mercenary *Players* set them off with all the Charms and Advantages of Speaking. God forbid that *Christians* who are remarkable for Modesty, and Reservedness; who are obliged to Discipline. and train’d up in Virtue, God forbid I say, that we should dishonour our Thoughts, much less our Practise. with such Wickedness as This!

\* *Spectacula.*

*Tertullian* who liv’d at the latter end of this Century is copious upon this subject; I shall translate but some Part of it



it. In his Apologetick, He thus addresseſſes Chap. 38.  
the Heathens.

‘ We keep off from your publick *Shews*,  
‘ because we can’t understand the War-  
‘ rant of their Original. There’s Super-  
‘ stition and Idolatry in the Case: And  
‘ we dislike the Entertainment because we  
‘ dislike the reason of its Institution. Be-  
‘ sides, We have nothing to do with the  
‘ Frenſies of the *Race Ground*, the Lewd-  
‘ nefs of the *Play House*, or the Barbari-  
‘ ties of the *Bear Garden*. The *Epicureans*  
‘ had the Liberty to ſtate the Notion,  
‘ and determine the Object of Pleaſure.  
‘ Why can’t we have the ſame Privilege?  
‘ what Offence is it then if we differ from  
‘ you in the Idea of Satisfaction? If we  
‘ won’t underſtand to brighten our Hu-  
‘ mour, and live pleaſantly, where’s the  
‘ harm? If any body has the worſt on’t,  
‘ ’tis only our ſelves.

His Book *de Spectaculis* was wrote on  
purpose to diſwade the Chriſtians, from the  
publick Diverſions of the *Heathens*, of  
which the *Play-Houſe* was one. In his  
firſt Chapter He gives them to under-  
ſtand, ‘ That the Tenour of their Faith,  
‘ the Reason of Principle, and the Order  
‘ of Discipline, had barr’d them the Enter-  
‘ tainments of the *Town*. And therefore  
‘ He exhorts them to reſreſh their Me-  
‘ mories,

## The Opinion of the Church

‘mories, to run up to their Baptism,  
 ‘and recollect their first Engagements.  
 ‘For without care, Pleasure is a strange  
 ‘bewitching Thing. When it gets the  
 ‘Ascendant, ’twill keep on Ignorance for  
 ‘an Excuse of Liberty, make a man’s Con-  
 ‘science wink, and suborn his Reason a-  
 ‘gainst himself.

Chap. 3.

‘But as he goes on, some peoples Faith  
 ‘is either too full of Scruples, or too bar-  
 ‘ren of Sense. Nothing will serve to set-  
 ‘tle them but a plain Text of *Scripture*.  
 ‘They hover in uncertainty because ’tis  
 ‘not said as expressly thou shalt not go  
 ‘to the *Play-House*, as ’tis thou shalt not  
 ‘Kill. But this looks more like Fencing  
 ‘than Argument. For we have the Mea-  
 ‘ning of the prohibition tho’ not the sound,  
 ‘in the first *Psalms*. *Blessed is the Man*  
*that walks not in the Council of the Ungodly;*  
*nor stands in the way of Sinners, nor sits in*  
*the Seat of the Scornful.*

Ibid.

Cap. 10.

‘The *Censors* whose business ’twas to  
 ‘take care of Regularity and Manners,  
 ‘look’d on these *Play-Houses* as no other  
 ‘than *Batteries* upon Virtue and Sobriety,  
 ‘and for this reason often pull’d them  
 ‘down before they were well built. so  
 ‘that here we can argue from the *Pre-*  
 ‘cedents of meer *Nature*, and plead the  
 ‘*Heathens* against themselves. Upon this  
 ‘view

view *Pompey* the Great, when he built  
 his *Dramatick* Bawdy-House, clapp'd a  
 Chappel a Top on't. He would not let it  
 go under the Name of a Play-House, but  
 conven'd the people to a Solemn Dedi-  
 cation, and called it *Venus's* Temple; Gi-  
 ving them to understand at the same  
 time that there were *Benches* under it for  
 Diversion. He was afraid if he had not  
 gone this way to work, The *Censors*  
 might afterwards have razed the Monu-  
 ment, and branded his Memory. Thus a  
 Scandalous pile of Building was pro-  
 tected: The Temple, cover'd the Play-  
 House, and Discipline was baffled by  
 Superstition. But the Design is notably  
 suited to the Patronage of *Bacchus* \* and  
*Venus*. These two Confederate Devils  
 of Lust and Intemperance, do well toge-  
 ther. The very Functions of the *Players*  
 resemble their *Protectors*, and are in-  
 stances of Service and Acknowledgment.  
 Their Motion is effeminate, and their  
 Gestures vitious and Significant: And  
 thus they worship the Luxury of one  
 Idoll, and the Lewdness of the other.

\*The Play-  
 houses were  
 Dedicated  
 to Bacchus.

Ibid. cap.

And granting the Regards of Quality,  
 the Advantages of Age, or Temper,  
 may fortifie some People; granting Mo-  
 desty secur'd, and the Diversion as it  
 were refin'd by this Means: Yet a Man  
 must

## The Opinion of the Church

‘ must not expect to stand by perfectly un-  
 ‘ moved, and impregnable. No body can  
 ‘ be pleas’d without Sensible Impressions:  
 ‘ Nor can such Perceptions be received  
 ‘ without a Train of Passions attending  
 ‘ them. These Consequences will be sure  
 ‘ to work back upon their Causes, sollicit  
 ‘ the Fancy, and heighten the Original  
 ‘ Pleasure. But if a Man pretends to be a  
 ‘ *Stoick* at *Plays*, he falls under another  
 ‘ Imputation. For where there is no Im-  
 ‘ pression, there can be no Pleasure: And  
 ‘ then the *Spectator* is very much Im-  
 ‘ pertinent, in going where he gets no-  
 ‘ thing for his Pains. And if this were  
 ‘ all; I suppose Christians have something  
 ‘ else to do than to ramble about to no pur-  
 ‘ pose.

*Ibid.* cap.  
22.

‘ Even those very Magistrates who abet  
 ‘ the *Stage*, discountenance the *Players*.  
 ‘ They stigmatize their *Character*, and  
 ‘ cramp their Freedoms. The whole  
 ‘ Tribe of them is thrown out of all Ho-  
 ‘ nour and Privilege. They are neither  
 ‘ suffer’d to be Lords, nor Gentlemen:  
 ‘ To come within the *Senate*, or harangue  
 ‘ the People, or so much as to be Members  
 ‘ of a *Common-Council*. Now what Caprice  
 ‘ and Inconsistency is this! To love what  
 ‘ we punish, and lessen those whom we ad-  
 ‘ mire! To cry up the *Mystery*, and cen-  
 ‘ sure

sure the practise; For a Man to be as it  
were eclips'd upon the score of Merit is  
certainly an odd sort of Justice! True.  
But the Inference lies stronger another  
way. What a Confession then is this of  
an Ill Business; when the very Excellen-  
cy of it is not without Infamy?

Since therefore Humane Prudence has  
thought fit to degrade the Stage, not-  
withstanding the Divertingness of it. *Ibid. cap.*

Since Pleasure can't make them an Inte-  
rest Here, nor shelter them from Censure.  
How will They be able to stand the shock  
of Divine Justice, and what *Reckoning*  
have they *Reason* to expect Hereafter?

All things consider'd 'tis no wonder  
such People should fall under Possession.  
God knows we have had a sad Example  
of this already. A certain Woman went *Ibid. cap.*  
to the Play-House, and brought the Devil  
Home with Her. And when the Un-  
clean Spirit was press'd in the *Exorcism*  
and ask'd how he durst attack a Christi-  
an. I have done nothing (says he) but  
what I can justify. For I seiz'd her up-  
on my own Ground. Indeed, how ma-  
ny Instances have we of others who have  
apostatiz'd from God, by this Correspon-  
dence with the Devil? What *Communion*  
has Light with Darknes? No Man can serve

## The Opinion of the Church

two Masters, nor have Life and Death in  
him at the same time.

*Ibid.*

cap. 27.

‘Will you not then avoid this Seat of  
‘Infection? The very Air suffers by their  
‘Impurities; And they almost Pronounce  
‘the Plague. What tho’ the performance  
‘may be in some measure pretty and enter-  
‘taining? What tho’ Innocence, yes and Vir-  
‘tue too, shines through some part of it?  
‘Tis not the custom to prepare Poyson  
‘unpalatable, nor make up Ratsbane with  
‘Rhubarb and Sena. No. To have the  
‘Mischief speed, they must oblige the  
‘Sense, and make the Dose pleasant. Thus  
‘the Devil throws in a Cordial Drop  
‘to make the Draught go down; And  
‘steals some few Ingredients from the  
‘Dispensatory of Heaven. In short, look  
‘upon all the engaging Sentences of the  
‘Stage; Their flights of Fortitude, and  
‘Philosophy, the Loftiness of their Stile,  
‘the Musick of the Cadence, and the  
‘Fineness of the Conduct; Look upon it  
‘only I say as Honey dropping from  
‘the Bowels of a Toad, or the Bag of a  
‘Spider: Let your Health over-rule your  
‘Pleasure, and don’t die of a little Li-  
‘quorishness.

*Ibid. cap.*

28.

‘In earnest Christian, our time for En-  
‘ertainment is not yet: you are too cra-  
‘ving and ill managed if you are so violent  
‘for

## Concerning the Stage.

259

for Delight. And let me tell you, no  
wiser than you should be, if you count  
such Things Satisfaction. Some Philoso-  
phers placed their Happiness in bare  
Tranquility. Easiness of Thought, and  
Absence of Pain, was all they aim'd at.  
But this it seems won't Satisfie Thee :  
Thou liest sighing and hankering after  
the *Play-House*. Prethee recollect thy self :  
Thou knowest Death ought to be our  
Pleasure ; And therefore I hope Life may  
be a little without it. Are not our De-  
sires the same with the Apostles, *To be*  
*Diffolv'd and to be with Christ*. Let us act  
up to our pretensions, and let Pleasure  
be true to Inclination.

But if you can't wait for Delight ; if *Isib. cap.*  
you must be put into present Possession, *29.*  
wee'll cast the Cause upon that Issue.  
Now were you not unreasonable, you  
would perceive the Liberalities of Provi-  
dence, and find your self almost in the  
mid'st of Satisfaction. For what can be  
more transporting than the Friendship of  
Heaven, and the Discovery of Truth than  
the Sense of our Mistakes, and the Par-  
don of our Sins ? What greater Pleasure  
can there be, than to scorn being *Pleas'd* ?  
To contemn the World ? And to be a  
Slave to Nothing ? Tis a mighty satis-  
faction I take it, to have a clear Conscience ;

## The Opinion of the Church

\* By Exor.  
cisms.

Lib. 3.  
Padag.  
Ann. 204.  
cap. 11.

'To make Life no Burthen, nor Death  
'any Terror! To trample upon the  
'Pagan Deities; To batter *Principali-*  
'*ties* and *Powers*, and force the Devils to  
'Resign! \* These are the Delights, these  
'are the noble Entertainments of Christi-  
'ans: And besides the advantage of the  
'Quality, they are always at hand, and  
'cost us nothing.

*Clement Alexandrinus* affirms 'That the  
'Circus and Theatre may not improperly  
'be call'd the *Chair of Pestilence*.—  
'Away then with these Lewd, Ungodly  
'Diversions, and which are but Imperti-  
'nence at the Best. What part of Impu-  
'dence either in words or practise, is omit-  
'ted by the Stage? Don't the Buffoons  
'take almost all manner of Liberties, and  
'plunge through Thick and Thin, to make  
'a jest? Now those who are affected with  
'a vitious satisfaction, will be haunted with  
'the Idea, and spread the Infection. But  
'if a man is not entertain'd to what pur-  
'pose should he go Thither? Why should  
'he be fond where he finds nothing, and  
'court that which sleeps upon the Sense?  
'If 'tis said these Diversions are taken on-  
'ly to unbend the Mind, and refresh Na-  
'ture a little. To this I answer, That  
'the spaces between Business should not



'be fill'd up with such Rubbish. A wise  
'man has a Guard upon his Recreations,  
'and always prefers, the Profitable to the  
'Pleasant.

*Minutius Felix* delivers his Sense in *Ann. 206.*  
these Words:

'As for us, who rate our Degree by  
'our Virtue, and value our selves more  
'upon our Lives, than our Fortunes; we  
'decline your Pompous *Shews*, and pub-  
'lick Entertainments. And good Reason  
'we have for our Aversion. These Things  
'have their Rise from Idols, and are the  
'Train of a false Religion. The Plea-  
'sure is ill Descended, and likewise Viti-  
'ous and ensnaring. For who can do less  
'than abominate, the Clamorous Disor-  
'ders of the *Race-Ground*, and the pro-  
'fession of Murther at the *Prize*. And  
'for the *Stage*, there you have more  
'Lewdness, tho' not a jot less of Distrac-  
'tion. Sometimes your *Mimicks*, are so  
'Scandalous and Expressing, that 'tis almost  
'hard to distinguish between the *Fact* and  
'the *Representation*. Sometimes a Lusci-  
'ous *Actor* shall whine you into Love,  
'and give the Disease that he Counterfeits.

*St. Cyprian* or the Author *de Spectaculis*,  
will furnish us farther.

Here this Father argues against those  
who thought the *Play-House* no unlawful

## The Opinion of the Church

Diversion, because 'twas not Condemn'd  
 by exprefs *Scripture*. ' Let meer Modesty  
 ' (says he) supply the *Holy Text*: And  
 ' let *Nature* govern where *Revelation*  
 ' does not reach. Some Things are too  
 ' black to lie upon *Paper*, and are more  
 ' strongly forbidden, because unmention'd.  
 ' The Divine Wisdom must have had a  
 ' low Opinion of *Christians*, had it descen-  
 ' ded to particulars in this Case. Silence  
 ' is sometimes the best Method for Autho-  
 ' rity. To forbid often puts People in  
 ' mind of what they should not do; And  
 ' thus the force of the Precept is lost by  
 ' naming the Crime. Besides, what need  
 ' we any farther Instruction? Discipline  
 ' and general Restraint makes up the  
 ' Meaning of the Law; and common Rea-  
 ' son will tell you what the *Scripture* has  
 ' left unsaid. I would have every one  
 ' examine his own Thoughts, and inquire  
 ' at home into the Duties of his Profes-  
 ' sion. This is a good way to secure  
 ' him from Indecency. For those Rules  
 ' which a Man has work'd out for him-  
 ' self, he commonly makes most use of.—  
 And after having describ'd the infamous  
 Diversions of the *Play-House*; He expostu-  
 lates in this Manner.

' What business has a Christian at such  
 ' Places as these? A Christian who has not  
 ' the

'the Liberty so much as to think of an  
'ill Thing. Why does he entertain him-  
'self with Lewd Representations? Has  
'he a mind to discharge his Modesty,  
'and be flesh'd for the *Practise*? Yes. this  
'is the Consequence. By using to see these  
'Things, hee'l learn to do them.—  
'What need I mention the Levities, and  
'Impertinence in *Comedies*, or the ranting  
'Distractions of *Tragedy*? Were these  
'Things unconcern'd with Idolatry, Chri-  
'stians ought not to be at them. For  
'were they not highly Criminal, the Fool-  
'ery of them is egregious, and unbecom-  
'ing the Gravity of *Believers*.—

'As I have often said these Foppish,  
'these pernicious Diversions, must be a-  
'voided. We must set a guard upon  
'our Senses, and keep the Sentinel always  
'upon Duty. To make Vice familiar to  
'the Ear, is the way to recommend it.  
'And since the mind of Man has a Natu-  
'ral Bent to Extravagance; how is it  
'likely to hold out under Example, and  
'Invitation? If you push that which tot-  
'ters already, whether will it tumble?  
'In earnest, we must draw off our Incl-  
'inations from these Vanities. A Christian  
'has much better *Sights* than these to  
'look at. He has solid Satisfaction in his  
S 4 'Power,

## The Opinion of the Church

‘Power, which will please and improve  
‘him at the same time.

‘Would a Christian be agreeably Re-  
‘fresh’d? Let him read the *Scriptures*:  
‘Here the Entertainment will suit his  
‘Character, and be big enough for his Qua-  
‘lity.— Beloved, how noble, how mo-  
‘ving, how profitable a pleasure is it to  
‘be thus employed? To have our Expec-  
‘tations always in prospect, and to be intent  
‘on the Glories of Heaven?

He has a great deal more upon this Sub-  
ject in his *Epistles* to *Donatus* and *Eucra-  
tius*, which are undoubtedly genuine. The  
later being somewhat remarkable, I shall  
Translate part of it for the Reader.

Ad Eu-  
crat.

‘Dear Brother, your usual Kindness,  
‘together with your desire of relieving  
‘your own Modesty and mine, has put  
‘you upon asking my Thoughts concer-  
‘ning a certain *Player* in your Neighbour-  
‘hood; whether such a Person ought to  
‘be allow’d the Privilege of *Communion*.  
‘This Man it seems continues in his Scan-  
‘dalous Profession, and keeps a Nursery  
‘under him. He Teaches that which ’twas  
‘a Crime in him to Learn, sets up for a  
‘Master of Debauch, and Propagates the  
‘lewd Mystery. The case standing thus,  
‘’tis my Opinion that the Admission of  
‘such a *Member* would be a Breach of the  
‘Discipline

Discipline of the Gospel, and a Presumption upon the Divine Majesty: Neither do I think it fit the Honour of the Church should suffer by so Infamous a Correspondence.

*Lactantius's* Testimony shall come next.

This Author in his *Divine Institutions*, Lib. 6. cap. 20. which he Dedicates to *Constantine* the Great, cautions the Christians against the *Play-House*, from the Disorder, and danger of those places. For as he observes.

The debauching of Virgins, and the Amours of Strumpets, are the Subject of *Comedy*. And here the Rule is, the more Rhetorick the more Mischief, and the best *Poets* are the worst Common-Wealths-men. For the Harmony and Ornament of the Composition serves only to recommend the Argument, to fortifie the Charm, and engage the Memory. At last he concludes with this advice.

Let us avoid therefore these Diversions, least somewhat of the Malignity should seize us. Our Minds should be quiet and Compos'd, and not over-run with Amusements. Besides, a Habit of Pleasure is an ensnaring Circumstance. 'Tis Ibid. cap. 21. apt to make us forget God, and grow cool in the Offices of Virtue.

Should

## The Opinion of the Church

‘Should a Man have a Stage at Home,  
‘would not his Reputation suffer extream-  
‘ly, and all people count him a notorious  
‘Libertine? most undoubtedly. Now the  
‘Place does not alter the Property. The  
‘Practise at the *Play-House* is the same  
‘thing, only there he has more Compa-  
‘ny to keep him in Countenance.

‘A well work’d *Poem* is a powerful  
‘piece of Imposture: It masters the Fan-  
‘cy, and hurries it no body knows whi-  
‘ther.—If therefore we would be go-  
‘vern’d by Reason let us stand off from  
‘the Temptation, such Pleasures can have  
‘no good Meaning. Like delicious Mor-  
‘sels they subdue the Palate, and flatter  
‘us only to cut our Throats. Let us pre-  
‘fer Reality to Appearance, Service, to  
‘Show; and Eternity to time.

*Ibid. cap.*  
22.

‘As God makes Virtue the Condition  
‘of Glory, and trains men up to Hap-  
‘piness by Hardship and Industry.  
‘So the Devil’s road to Destruction lies  
‘through Sensuality and *Epicurism*. And  
‘as pretended Evils lead us on to un-  
‘counterfeited Bliss; So Visionary Satis-  
‘factions are the causes of Real Misery.  
‘In short, These Inviting Things are all  
‘stratagem. Let us, take care the soft-  
‘ness and Importunity of the Pleasure  
‘does not surprise us, nor the Bait bring  
‘us

'us within the snare. The Senses are  
'more than *Out-Works*, and should be  
'defended accordingly.

I shall pass over St. *Ambrose*, and go <sup>In Psal.</sup> on to St. *Chrysostome*. This *Father* is copious upon the Subject, I could translate some *Sheets* from him were it necessary. But length being not my Business, a few Lines may serve to discover his Opinion. His 15 *Homily ad Populum Antiochenum*, runs thus.

'Most People fancy the Unlawfulness  
'of going to *Plays* is not clear. But by their  
'favour, a world of Disorders are the  
'Consequences of such a Liberty. For  
'frequenting the *Play-House* has brought  
'Whoring and Ribaldry into Vogue, and  
'finish'd all the parts of Debauchery.

Afterwards he seems to make the supposition better than the *Fact*, and argues upon a feign'd Case.

'Let us not only avoid downright Sin-  
'ning, but the Tendencies to it. Some In-  
'different Things are fatal in the Confe-  
'quence, and strike us at the Rebound.  
'Now who would chuse his standing with-  
'in an Inch of a Fall; or swim upon the  
'Verge of a Whirlpool? He that walks upon  
'a Precipice, shakes tho' he does not tum-  
'ble. And commonly his Concern brings  
'him to the Bottom. The Case is much  
'the

## The Opinion of the Church

' the same in reference to Conscience and  
' Morality. He that won't keep his Di-  
' stance from the Gulph, is oftentimes  
' suck'd in by the Eddy; and the least  
' oversight is enough to undo Him.

In his 37 Homily upon the Eleventh  
Chapter of St. *Mathew*, he declaims more  
at large against the Stage.

' Smutty Songs (says he) are much  
' more abominable then Stench and Or-  
' dure. And which is most to be lamen-  
' ted, you are not at all uneasy at such  
' Licentiousness. You Laugh when you  
' should Frown; and Commend what  
' you ought to abhor. — Heark you, you  
' can keep the Language of your own  
' House in order: If your Servants or  
' your Childrens Tongues run Riot, they  
' presently smart for't. And yet at the  
' *Play-House* you are quite another Thing.  
' These little Buffoons have a strange As-  
' cendant. A luscious Sentence is huge-  
' ly welcome from their Mouth: And in-  
' stead of Censure, they have thanks and  
' encouragement for their Pains. Now  
if a Man would be so just as to won-  
' der at himself, here's Madness, and Con-  
' tradiction in Abundance.

' But I know you'l say what's this to  
' me, I neither sing nor pronounce, any  
' of this Lewd stuff? Granting your Plea,

' what



‘what do you get by’t? If you don’t re-  
 ‘peat these Scurrilities, you are very wil-  
 ‘ling to hear them. Now whether the  
 ‘Ear, or the Tongue is mismanaged, comes  
 ‘much to the same reckoning. The diffe-  
 ‘rence of the *Organ*, does not alter the  
 ‘Action so mightily, as you may imagine.  
 ‘But pray how do you prove you don’t re-  
 ‘peat them? They may be your Dis-  
 ‘course, or the Entertainments of your  
 ‘Closet for ought we know to the con-  
 ‘trary. This is certain; you hear them  
 ‘with pleasure in your Face, and make  
 ‘it your business to run after them: And  
 ‘to my Mind, these are strong Arguments  
 ‘of your Approbation.

‘I desire to ask you a Question. Sup-  
 ‘pose you hear any wretches Blaspheme,  
 ‘are you in any Rapture about it? And  
 ‘do your Gestures appear airy, and oblig’d?  
 ‘Far from it. I doubt not but your blood  
 ‘grows chill, and your Ears are stopt at  
 ‘the Presumption. And what’s the Rea-  
 ‘son of this Aversion in your Behaviour?  
 ‘Why ’tis because you don’t use to Blas-  
 ‘pheme, your self. Pray clear your self  
 ‘the same way from the Charge of Ob-  
 ‘scenity. Wee’ll then believe you don’t  
 ‘talk Smut, when we perceive you care-  
 ‘ful not to hear it. Lewd Sonnets, and  
 ‘Serenades are quite different from the  
 ‘Pre-

## The Opinion of the Church

'Prescription of Virtue. This is strange  
 'Nourishment for a Christian to take in  
 'I don't wonder you should lose your  
 'Health, when you feed thus Foul. It  
 'may be Chastity is no such easy Task!  
 'Innocence moves upon an Ascent, at least  
 'for some time. Now those who are al-  
 'ways Laughing can never strain up Hill.  
 'If the best preparations of Care will just  
 'do, what must become of those that are  
 'dissolv'd in Pleasure, and lie under the In-  
 'structions of Debauchery? — Have you  
 'not heard how that St. Paul exhorts us to  
 'rejoice in the Lord? He said in the Lord;  
 'not in the Devil. But alas! what lei-  
 'sure have you to mind St. Paul? How  
 'should you be sensible of your Faults,  
 'when your Head is always kept Hot,  
 'and as it were intoxicated with Buf-  
 'fooning? — He goes on, and lashes  
 'the Impudence of the Stage, with a great  
 'deal of Satire and Severity; and at last  
 'proposes this Objection. *iniquitatem*  
 'You'll say, I can give you many Instan-  
 'ces where the Play-House has done no  
 'Harm. Don't mistake. Throwing a-  
 'way of Time and ill example, has a great  
 'deal of Harm in't; and thus far you are  
 'guilty at the best. For granting your  
 'own Virtue impenetrable, and out of  
 'Reach, Granting the Protection of your  
 'Temper has brought you off unhurt,  
 are

‘are all People thus Fortified? By no means. However, many a weak Brother has ventur’d after you, and miscarried upon your *Precedent*, And since you make others thus *Faulty*, how can you be *Innocent* your self? All the People undone There, will lay their Ruine at your Door. The Company are all Accessary to the Mischief of the Place. For were there no *Audience*, we should have no *Acting*. And therefore those who joyn in the Crime, will ne’er be parted in the Punishment. Granting your Modesty has secur’d you, which by the way I believe nothing of; yet since many have been debanch’d by the *Play-House*, you must expect a severe Reckoning for giving them Encouragement. Tho’ after all, as Virtuous as you are, I doubt not, you wou’d have been much Better, had you kept away.

‘In fine, Let us not dispute to no purpose; The practise won’t bear a Defence! Where the Cause is nought tis in vain to rack our Reason, and strain for Pretences. The best excuse for what is past, is to stand clear from the danger, and do so no more.

One citation more from St. *Chrysostom*, and I take Leave. In the Preface of his Commentary upon St. *John’s* Gospel speaking of *Plays* and other Publick *Shews*, he has these words.

‘But

# The Opinion of the Church

‘But what need I branch out the Lewd-  
 ‘ness of those *Spectacles*, and be particu-  
 ‘lar in Description? For what’s there to  
 ‘be met with but Lewd Laughing, but  
 ‘Smut, Railing, and Buffoonry? In a  
 ‘word. ’Tis all Scandal and Confusion.  
 ‘Observe me, I speak to you all; Let  
 ‘none who partake of this *Holy-Table*,  
 ‘unqualifie themselves with such Mortal  
 ‘Diversions.

St. *Hierom* on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Verse, 32 *Psal.*  
 makes this Exposition upon the *Text*.

‘Some are delighted with the Satisfac-  
 ‘tions of this World, some with the *Circus*,  
 ‘and some with the *Theatre*: But the  
 ‘*Psalmist* commands every good Man to  
 ‘*delight himself in the Lord*.——For as  
 ‘*Isaiah* speaks. *Woe to them that put bitter*  
 ‘*for sweet, and sweet for bitter*. And in  
 his *Epistles* he cautions the Ladies against  
 having any thing to do with the *Play-*  
*House*, against Lewd Songs, and Ill Con-  
 versation. Because they set ill Humours  
 at work, Caress the Fancy, and make  
 pleasure a Conveyance for Destruction.

Ep. 9. 12.  
*Advers.*  
*Jovinian.*  
 Lib. 2.  
 cap. 7.

In the 6<sup>th</sup>. Book of his Commentary on  
*Ezekiel* he lets us understand; That  
 ‘when we depart out of *Egypt* we must  
 ‘refine our Inclinations, and change our  
 ‘Delights into Aversion. And after some  
 ‘other Instances. He tells us we must  
 decline

Chap. 20.

'decline the *Theatres*, and all other dangerous Diversions, which stain the Innocence of the Soul, and slip into the *Walt* through the Senses.

St. *Augustine* in his 5th. Epistle to *Marcellinus* will afford us something upon the same Argument.

'The prosperity of Sinners is their greatest Unhappiness. If one may say so, They are most Punish'd when they are overlook'd. By this means their bad Temper is encourag'd, and they are more inclin'd to be false to themselves; And we know an Enemy *within*, is more dangerous than one *without*. But the perverse Reasonings of the Generality, make different Conclusions. They fancy the World goes wonderfully well when People make a Figure. When a Man is a Prince in his Fortune, but a Begger in his Virtue; Has a great many fine Things about him, but not so much as one good Quality to deserve them. When the *Play-Houses* go up, and Religion go's down. When Prodigality is admir'd; and Charity laugh'd at. When the *Players* can revel with the Rich Man's purse; And the Poor have scarce enough to keep Life and Soul together.—When God suffers these Things to flourish, we may be sure he is most Angry. Present Impunity, is the deepest Revenge.

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when

## The Opinion of the Church

‘when he cuts off the Supplies of Luxury, and disables the Powers of Extravagance, then as one may say, he is mercifully severe.

cap. 33.

In his 1st. Book *de consensu Evangelistarum*, He answers an objection of the Heathens, and comes up to the Case in Hand.

‘Their Complaint as if the Times were less happy since the Appearance of Christianity is very unreasonable. Let them read their own Philosophers: There they’ll find those very Things censured, which they now are so uneasy to part with; This Remark must shut up their Mouths, and convince them of the Excellency of our Religion. For pray what satisfactions have they lost? None that I know of, excepting some Licentious ones, which they abused to the Dishonour of their Creatour. But it may be the Times are bad because the Theatres are Tumbling almost every where. The Theaters those Cages of Uncleaness, and publick Schools of Debauchery.—And what’s the Reason of their running to Ruine? Why ’tis the Reformation of the Age: ’Tis because those Lewd Practices are out of Fashion, which first built and kept them in Countenance. Their own Tully’s Commendation of the Actor *Roscius* is remarkable. He was so much

‘a Master (says he) that none but him-  
 ‘self was worthy to Tread the Stage. And  
 ‘on the other hand, so good a Man, that  
 ‘he was the most unfit Person of the Gang  
 ‘to come There. And is not this a plain  
 ‘Confession of the Lewdness of the Play-  
 ‘House; And that the better a Man was,  
 ‘the more he was obliged to forbear it?

I could go on, much farther with St.  
*Agustine*, but I love to be as brief as may  
 be. I could likewise run through the  
 succeeding *Centuries*, and collect Evidence  
 all along. But I conceive the best Ages,  
 and the biggest Authorities, may be suffici-  
 ent: And these the *Reader* has had already.  
 However, one Instance more from the  
*Moderns* may not be amiss. *Didacus de*  
*Tapia* an eminent *Spaniard*, shall close the  
*Evidence*. This Author in debating the  
 Question whether *Players* might be ad-  
 mitted to the *Sacrament*, amongst other  
 things encounters an Objection. Some Peo-  
 ple it seems pretended there was some good  
 to be learn’d at the *Play-House*. To these,  
 he makes this reply.

‘Granting your Supposition, (says He)  
 ‘your Inference is naught. Do People use  
 ‘to send their Daughters to the *Stews* for  
 ‘Discipline? And yet it may be, they  
 ‘might meet some there lamenting their  
 ‘own Debauchery. No Man will breed  
 ‘his Son upon the *High-way*, to harden his

## The Conclusion.

Didac. &c.  
in D. Thom.  
p. 546.

‘Courage; Neither will any one go on  
‘board a Leaky Vessel, to learn the Art of  
‘shifting in a Wreck the better. My con-  
‘clusion is, let no body go to the Infamous  
‘*Play-House*. A place of such staring Con-  
‘tradiction to the Strictness and Sobriety  
‘of Religion: A place hated by God, and  
‘haunted by the Devil. Let no man I say  
‘learn to relish any thing that’s said there;  
‘For ’tis all but Poyson handsomly pre-  
‘pared.

Thus I have presented the *Reader* with  
a short View of the Sense of *Christianity*.  
This was the Opinion of the *Church* for  
the first 500 Years. And thus she has  
Censured the *Stage* both in *Councils*,  
and Single *Authorities*. And since the Sa-  
tir of the *Fathers* comes full upon the  
*Modern Poets*, their Caution must be ap-  
plicable. The parity of the Case makes  
their Reasons take place, and their Autho-  
rity revive upon us. If we are *Christians*,  
the *Canons* of *Councils*, and the Sense of the  
Primitive *Church* must have a weight. The  
very Time is a good argument of it self.  
Then the *Apostolical Traditions* were fresh,  
and undisputed; and the *Church* much bet-  
ter agreed than she has been since. Then,  
Discipline was in Force, and Virtue Flou-  
rish’d, and People lived up to their *Profes-  
sion*. And as for the *Persons*, they are be-  
yond all exception. Their *Station*, their  
Learning,



Learning, and Sufficiency was very Considerable; Their Piety and Resolution, extraordinary. They acted generously, and wrote freely, and were always above the little Regards of Interest or Danger. To be short; They were, as we may say the *Worthies* of *Christendom*, the Flower of Humane Nature, and the Top of their *Species*. Nothing can be better establish'd than the Credit of these *Fathers*: Their Affirmation goes a great way in a proof; And we might argue upon the strength of their *Character*.

But supposing them contented to wave their Privilege, and dispute upon the Level. Granting this, the *Stage* would be undone by them. The Force of their Reasoning, and the bare *Intrinsic* of the Argument would be abundantly sufficient to carry the Cause.

But it may be objected, is the Resemblance exact between Old *Rome* and *London*, will the Paralel hold out, and has the *English Stage* any Thing so bad as the *Dancing* of the *Pantomimi*? I don't say that: The *Modern Gestures* tho' bold, and Lewd too sometimes, are not altogether so scandalous as the *Roman*. Here then we can make them some little Abatement.

And to go as far in their *Excuse* as we can, 'tis probable their *Musick* may not be altogether so exceptionable as that of the

## The Conclusion.

*Antients.* I don't say this part of the Entertainment is directly vitious, because I am not willing to Censure at Uncertainties. Those who frequent the *Play-House* are the most competent Judges: But this I must say, the Performances of this kind are much too fine for the *Place*. 'Twere to be wish'd that either the *Plays* were better, or the *Musick* worse. I'm sorry to see *Art* so meanly Prostituted: Atheism ought to have nothing Charming in its *Retinue*. 'Tis great Pity *Debauchery* should have the Assistance of a fine Hand, to whet the Appetite, and play it down.

Now granting the *Play-House Musick* not vicious in the Composition, yet the design of it is to refresh the *Idea's* of the *Action*, to keep *Time* with the *Poem*, and be true to the *Subject*. For this Reason among others the *Tunes* are generally Airy and Gai-liardizing: They are contriv'd on purpose to excite a sportive Humour, and spread a Gaiety upon the Spirits. To banish all Gravity and Scruple, and lay Thinking and Reflection a sleep. This sort of Musick warms the Passions, and unlocks the Fancy, and makes it open to Pleasure like a Flower to the Sun. It helps a Luscious Sentence to slide, drowns the Discords of *Atheism*, and keeps off the Aversions of Conscience. It throws a Man off his Guard, makes way for an ill Impression, and is most Com-modiously

modiously planted to do Mischief. A Lewd Play with good Musick is like a Loadstone *Arm'd*, it draws much stronger than before.

Now why should it be in the power of a few mercenary Hands to play People out of their Senses, to run away with their Understandings, and wind their Passions about their Fingers as they list? Musick is almost as dangerous as Gunpowder; And it may be requires looking after no less than the *Press*, or the *Mint*. 'Tis possible a Publick Regulation might not be amiss. No less a Philosopher than *Plato* seems to be of this Opinion. He is clearly for keeping up the old grave, and solemn way of *Playing*. He lays a mighty stress upon this Observation: He does not stick to affirm, that to extend the *Science*, and alter the *Notes*, is the way to have the *Laws* repeal'd and to unsettle the *Constitution*. I suppose He imagined that if the Power of *Sounds*, the Temper of *Constitutions*, and the Diversities of *Age*, were well studied; If this were done, and some general Permissions formed upon the Enquiry, the *Commonwealth* might find their Account in't.

*De Repub*  
L. 4.

*Tully* does not carry the Speculation thus high: However, he owns it has a weight in't, and should not be overlook'd. He denies not but that when the Musick is soft,

*Cic. de*  
*Leg. L. 2.*

## The Conclusion.

\* a Famous  
Musitian.

Ibid.

See Chap.  
1st.

exquisite, and airy, 'tis dangerous and en-  
flaming. He commends the Discipline of  
the antient *Greeks*, for fencing against this  
Inconvenience. He tells us the *Lacedemo-  
nians* fixt the number of Strings for the  
Harp, by express *Law*. And afterwards  
silenc'd *Timotheus*, \* and seiz'd his Harp,  
for having One String above publick Al-  
lowance. To return. If the *English Stage*  
is more reserv'd than the *Roman* in the  
Case above mention'd: If they have any  
advantage in their *Instrumental* Musick,  
they loose it in their *Vocal*. There *Songs*  
are often rampantly Lewd. and Irreligi-  
ous to a flaming Excess. Here you have  
the very *Spirit* and *Essence* of Vice drawn  
off strong seated, and thrown into a little  
Compass. Now the *Antients* as we have  
seen already were inoffensive in this re-  
spect.

To go on. As to Rankness of Lan-  
guage we have seen how deeply the *Mo-  
dems* stand charged upon the Comparison.  
And as for their Caressing of Libertines,  
their ridiculing of Virtue, their horrible  
Profaneness, and Blasphemies, there's no-  
thing in *Antiquity* can reach them.

Now were the *Stage* in a Condition  
to wipe off any of these Imputations, which  
They are not, there are two Things be-  
hind, which would stick upon them, and  
have an ill Effect upon the *Audience*.

The

## The Conclusion.

281

The first is their dilating so much upon the Argument of Love.

This Subject is generally treated Home, and in the most tender and passionate manner imaginable. 'Tis often the governing Concern: The Incidents make way, and the *Plot* turns upon't. As matters go, the Company expect it: And it may be the *Poets* can neither Write, nor Live without it. This is a cunning way enough of stealing upon the Blind Side, and Practising upon the Weakness of humane Nature. People love to see their *Passions* painted no less than their *Persons*: And like *Narcissus* are apt to dote on their own Image. This Bent of self Admiration recommends the Business of *Amours*, and engages the Inclination. And which is more, these Love-representations oftentimes call up the Spirits, and set them on work. The *Play* is acted over again in the *Scene* of Fancy, and the first Imitation becomes a Model. Love has generally a *Party Within*; And when the Wax is prepared, the Impression is easily made. Thus the Disease of the *Stage* grows Catching: It throws its own *Amours* among the Company, and forms these Passions when it does not find them. And when they are born before, they thrive extreamly in this *Nursery*. Here they seldom fail either of Growth, or Complexion.

They

## The Conclusion.

They grow strong, and they grow Char-  
ming too. This is the best Place to reco-  
ver a Languishing Amour, to rowse it  
from Sleep, and retrive it from Indiffe-  
rence. And thus Desire becomes Absolute,  
and forces the Oppositions of Decency  
and Shame. And if the Misfortune does  
not go thus far, the consequences are none  
of the best. The Passions are up in Arms;  
and there's a mighty Contest between Du-  
ty, and Inclination. The Mind is over-run  
with Amusements, and commonly good  
for nothing sometime after.

I don't lay the *Stage Fells* all before  
them, and disables the whole *Audience*.  
'Tis a hard Battle where none escapes.  
However, Their *Triumps* and their *Tro-  
pheys* are unspeakable. Neither need we  
much wonder at the Matter. They are  
dangerously Prepar'd for Conquest, and  
Empire. There's Nature, and Passion,  
and Life, in all the Circumstances of their  
*Action*. Their Declamation, their *Mein*,  
their Gestures, and their Equipage, are  
very moving and significant. Now when  
the Subject is agreeable, a lively Represen-  
tation, and a Passionate way of Expression,  
make wild work, and have a strange Force  
upon the Blood, and Temper.

And then as for the General Strains of  
Courtship, there can be nothing more Pro-  
fane and extravagant. The Hero's Mistress

is

is no less than his Deity. She disposes of his Reason, prescribes his Motions, and Commands his Interest. What Sovereign Respect, what Religious Address, what Idolizing Raptures are we peester'd with? *Shrines* and *Offerings*, and Adorations, are nothing upon such solemn Occasions. Thus Love and Devotion, Ceremony and Worship, are Confounded; And God, and his Creatures treated both alike! These Shreds of Distraction are often brought from the *Play-House* into Conversation: And thus the *Sparks* are taught to Court their Mistresses, in the same Language they say their *Prayers*.

A Second Thing which I have to object against the *Stage* is their encouraging Revenge. What is more Common than Duels and Quarrelling in their *Characters* of Figure? Those Practises which are infamous in Reason, *Capital* in *Law*, and Damnable in Religion, are the Credit of the *Stage*. Thus Rage and Resentment, Blood and Barbarity, are almost Deified: Pride goes for Greatness, and *Fiends* and *Heros* are made of the same Mettal. To give Instances were needless, nothing is more frequent. And in this respect the *French Dramatists* have been to blame no less than the *English*, And thus the Notion of Honour is mistated, the Maxims of Christianity despised, and the Peace of the World

*Vid. Cor-  
neille Cid.  
Cinna &  
Tomee.*

## The Conclusion.

Moral  
Essays.

World disturb'd. I grant this desperate Custom is no *Original* of the *Stage*. But then why was not the Growth of it check'd? I thought the *Poet's* business had not been to back false Reasoning and ill Practise; and to fix us in Frensy and Mistake! Yes. They have done their endeavour to cherish the Malignity, and keep the Disorder in Countenance. They have made it both the Mark, and the Merit of a Man of Honour; and set it off with *Quality*, and Commendation. But I have discours'd on this Subject elsewhere, and therefore shall pursue it no farther.

To draw towards an End. And here I must observe that these two later Exceptions are but Petty Mismanagements with respect to the Former. And when the best are thus bad, what are the worst? What must we say of the more foul Representations, of all the Impudence in Language and Gesture? Can this Stuff be the Inclination of *Ladies*? Is a *Reading* upon Vice so Entertaining, and do they love to see the *Scenes* *Dissected* before them? One would think the Dishonour of their own Sex, the Discovery of so much Lewdness, and the treating Human Nature so very Coarsly, could have little Satisfaction in't. Let us set Conscience aside, and throw the other World out of the Question: These Interests are far the greatest, but not all. The *Ladies* have other



other Motives to confine them. The Restraints of Decency, and the Considerations of Honour, are sufficient to keep them at Home. But hoping They will be just to themselves I shall wave this unacceptable Argument. I shall only add, that a Surprise ought not to be Censured. Accidents are no Faults. The strictest Virtue may sometimes stumble upon an *Ill Sight*. But Choice, and Frequency, and ill Ground, conclude strongly for Inclination. To be assured of the inoffensiveness of the *Play* is no more than a Necessary Precaution. Indeed the *Players* should be generally discouraged. They have no relish of Modesty, nor any scruples upon the Quality of the Treat. The grossest *Disb* when 'twill down is as ready as the Best. To say Money is their Business and they must *Live*, is the Plea of *Pick pockets*, and *High-way men*. These later may as well pretend their *Vocation* for a Lewd practise as the other. But

To give the Charge its due Compass: To comprehend the whole *Audience*, and take in the Motives of Religion.

And here I can't imagine how we can reconcile such Liberties with our Profession. These Entertainments are as it were Litterally renounc'd in *Baptism*. They are the *Vanities of the wicked World*, and the *Works of the Devil*, in the most open, and emphatical Signification. *What Communion*  
has

2 Cor. 6.

14.

*has Light with Darkneſs, and what concord has Chriſt with Belial.* Call you this Diverſion? Can Profaneneſs be ſuch an irrefiſtable Delight? Does the Crime of the Performance make the Spirit of the Satisfaction, and is the Scorn of Chriſtianity the Entertainment of Chriſtians? Is it ſuch a Pleaſure to hear the *Scriptures* burleſqu'd? Is Ribaldry ſo very obliging, and *Atheiſm* ſo Charming a Quality? Are we indeed willing to quit the Privilege of our Nature; to ſurrender our *Charter* of Immortality, and throw up the Pretences to another Life? It may be ſo! But then we ſhould do well to remember that *Nothing* is not in our Power. Our Deſires did not make us, neither can they unmake us. But I hope our wiſhes are not ſo mean, and that we have a better ſenſe of the Dignity of our *Being*. And if ſo, how can we be pleas'd with thoſe Things which would degrade us into Brutes, which ridicule our *Creed*, and turn all our Expectations into *Romance*.

And after all, the Jeſt on't is, theſe Men would make us believe their deſign is Virtue and Reformation. In good time! They are likely to combat Vice with ſucceſs, who deſtroy the Principles of Good and Evil! Take them at the beſt, and they do no more than expoſe a little Humour, and Formality. But then, as the Matter is manag'd, the Correction is much worſe than

than the Fault. They laugh at *Pedantry*, and teach *Atheism*, cure a Pimple, and give the Plague. I heartily wish they would have let us alone. To exchange Virtue for Behaviour is a hard Bargain. Is not plain Honesty much better than Hypocri-  
fy well Dress'd? What's Sight good for without Substance? What is a well Bred Libertine but a well bred Knave? One that can't prefer Conscience to Pleasure, without calling himself Fool: And will sell his Friend, or his Father, if need be, for his Convenience.

In short: Nothing can be more differ-  
viceable to Probity and Religion, than the management of the *Stage*. it cherishes those Passions, and rewards those Vices, which 'tis the business of Reason to dis-  
countenance. It strikes at the Root of Principle, draws off the Inclinations from Virtue, and spoils good Education: 'Tis the most effectual means to baffle the Force of Discipline, to emasculate peoples Spirits, and Debauch their Manners. How many of the Unwary have these *Syrens* devour'd? And how often has the best Blood been tainted, with this Infection? What Dis-  
appointment of Parents, what Confusion in Families, and What Beggery in Estates have been hence occasion'd? And which is still worse, the Mischief spreads dayly, and the Malignity grows more envenom'd.

The

## The Conclusion.

The Feavour works up towards Madness, and will scarcely endure to be touch'd. And what hope is there of Health when the *Patient* strikes in with the Disease, and flies in the Face of the *Remedy*? Can Religion retrieve us? Yes, when we don't despise it. But while our *Notions* are naught, our *Lives* will hardly be otherwise. What can the Assistance of the Church signify to those who are more ready to Rally the *Preacher*, than Practise the *Sermon*? To those who are overgrown with Pleasure, and hardned in Ill Custom? Who have neither Patience to hear, nor Conscience to take hold of? You may almost as well feed a Man without a Mouth, as give Advice where there's no disposition to receive it. 'Tis true; as long as there is Life there's Hope. Sometimes the Force of Argument, and the Grace of God, and the anguish of Affliction, may strike through the Prejudice, and make their way into the Soul. But these circumstances don't always meet, and then the Case is extreamly dangerous. For this miserable Temper, we may thank the *Stage* in a great Measure: And therefore, if I mistake not, They have the least pretence to Favour, and the most need of Repentance, of all Men Living.

THE END.

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